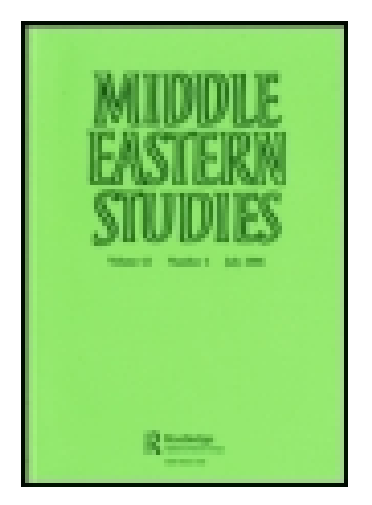


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Islam and the philosophers of history

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Albert Hourani

To H. A. R. Gibb

I

The appearance of Islam in the world was no ordinary event. It has not happened very often in history that a religious movement, springing up in a backward region, has within a generation engulfed some of the main centres of power and culture in the known world, and has then proved to be more than a short-lived barbarian incursion, a wave which receded as swiftly as it advanced, but on the contrary has left its mark on thirteen hundred years of history in a quarter of the world, and over the whole range of culture and society. What began as the preaching of a religion led soon to the founding of a state, and when the state dissolved it left behind a literary culture, a system of law, an organization of social life and a moral ideal which have helped to mould the nature of regions far beyond those

* I acknowledge with gratitude my great debt to the following works: N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960); J. W. Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1955), and 'Islam as an Historical Problem in European Historiography since 1800' in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, (Ed.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), pp. 304-14; A. Malvezzi, *L'Islamismo e la cultura europea* (Florence, 1956); R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Harvard, 1962); J. D. J. Waardenburg, *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident* (The Hague, 1961).

The substance of this essay has been given in the form of lectures and seminar talks on several occasions; I am grateful to those who attended them and helped the growth of my ideas by their criticisms and suggestions. A draft was circulated to the members of the Near Eastern History Group at Oxford, and I must thank them too for a valuable discussion of it.

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included in the state. Perhaps what is strangest of all is that this vast movement of peoples, of ideas, of laws and institutions should appear to have sprung in the last analysis from a single man, coming from the remote frontier of the civilized world of his time, and who has stamped his image on ages and peoples distant from his own:

> ...Car c'est bien à un homme, à Mahomet, celui qu'on appelle en arabe Mohammed, que l'on doit ce type d'hommes et ce type de culture. C'est lui qui a fait d'une poussière de tribus arabes une nation, d'un ramassis de clans en dispute, un État, d'un patois à peine écrit, une langue de civilisation mondiale. C'est à lui, à ses premières expéditions militaires, étonnants raids surprises de nuit en plein désert, *sarâyâ*, que remonte cette immense expansion qui a dilaté l'Islam avec la conquête arabe jusque chez les Iraniens, les Turcs et les Balkaniques, dans l'Inde, en Chine, en Malaisie et au Soudan.[1]

Almost from its birth Islam has been a problem for those in western Europe who have tried to find a meaning in human history, whether what they have searched for have been the laws of cause and effect or the intentions of God. The main purpose of this essay is to show how thinkers and scholars have looked at the problem since, at the beginning of the modern age, European thought took all learning for its province and tried to give a systematic account of what had happened in the past. But we should miss a whole dimension in their thought if we failed to grasp that, for the tradition in which they lived, Islam was no new problem, nor one which they could regard with the same detached curiosity as they might bring to the cultures and beliefs of India or China. Islam had always been a major fact of European history, and to the Christian world in which it expanded it posed problems both incidental and essential. In the first place it presented a military challenge: in its early phase of expansion under the Caliphs, and then eight hundred years later under the Turkish rulers of Asia Minor and the Balkans, it absorbed regions of Christian belief and culture and threatened the heart of western Christendom. It was important for the Christian peoples thus threatened to form some idea of what it was — the sources of its power, its aims and the probable direction of its policy. But there

was more to it than that: the military challenge was rooted in a system of doctrines which Christians did not accept as true, and yet, based as it was on a false belief, it had succeeded in conquering regions which had long been Christian. How could this be? For one brought up in the Augustinian view of history, believing that there is no earthly city which abides, that the righteous may perish and still be righteous, and that worldly triumph and disaster have no essential link with truth and falsehood, the victory of Islam did not of course prove that it was true. It did nevertheless pose a problem: what role, if any did the victory of Islam over Christianity play in the providential order of the world? Was it a punishment for the sins of Christians, or had it some more positive role in the gradual unfolding of the mystery of salvation? This question inevitably led to another: Islam no doubt was false, but in what precise sense was it false? It could not be regarded by Christians as wholly true: it denied the Crucifixion, the Incarnation and the Redemption, and it asserted the existence of a prophetic tradition after the events to which Old Testament prophecy pointed, the life and death of Christ, had taken place. On the other hand, it could scarcely be regarded as sheer paganism: it believed in one God, in His Revelation through prophets, in moral responsibility and the day of judgement.

In more recent times, this problem has acquired a new depth, as Christians have learnt more about Islam: the authenticity of some of the moral perceptions of the Qur'an, the sense of the majesty of God, of the nearness of the world's end, of the awe and agony of judgement, the purity of the mystics and saints, the *awliya'*, 'friends of God', the depth of the mark left by Islam on human history, and behind it all a note of authority in Muhammad's voice — all these seem, on the face of it, to require explanation, and at least it must be asked whether they can be explained in ordinary human terms. To such a question various answers may be suggested. Islam can be seen as a Christian heresy, or a snare of the devil to delude men from belief in the authentic Revelation, or an attempt by the unaided human reason to grasp truths of revelation, or an evangelical preparation for the acceptance by pagans of the Christian truth, or an independent path of salvation alongside those of the Church and Israel, a third religion springing from the same divine

source. For an orthodox Christian, these can be no more than suggestions. There has never been a single authentic and, so to speak, 'official' attitude of the Church towards Muhammad and his prophetic claims, and perhaps there cannot be: for one of the many causes of the tension and unease which have marked the relationship of Christians and Muslims is that, while Muslims regard Christianity as an essential stage of the process which culminated in the revelation through Muhammad, and simply by being Muslims are committed to a certain attitude towards Christianity, this is not so for Christians. Islam came later than the Christian revelation, it was not implied or foretold in it, and it added nothing to it. A Christian therefore need not take up a specific attitude towards Islam. While recognizing, as the Second Vatican Council has now done, elements of truth in the teaching of Islam, and the possibility of mutual understanding and cooperation in the moral and social order, he can still, if he wishes, refrain from posing the question of why and how Islam came to exist in a world already largely Christian; and if he asks the question, he can answer it in more than one way. Of those we have indicated, only the last would be difficult to reconcile with the teaching of the Church.

When Islam first appeared as a challenge to the Christian world, the attitude of Western Christians towards it was one of fear and horror. It continued to be so throughout the early Middle Ages down to the end of the Crusades. In a brilliant study,[2] Professor Southern has shown that this attitude was rooted in ignorance; or perhaps it would be more correct to say the opposite, that it was the fear and horror themselves which were the cause of ignorance and prejudice, for at a moment of mortal peril it was natural that men should regard their enemy as a monster in human form. The first four hundred years of the contact between Islam and Christendom were, on the side of the latter, an 'age of ignorance',[3] when Europeans knew virtually nothing of Islam and tried to interpret it in the light of the Bible alone. Muhammad was anti-Christ and the rise of Islam heralded the end of the world. More direct contact with Islam on a level of military equality, at the time of the Crusades, did not dissolve this ignorance. The attitude of Christians may have changed for a time from one of fear

to one of hope and triumph, but this scarcely increased their knowledge or deepened their understanding. Their new view of Islam was still an imaginative construction, although one born in the flush of victory.[4]

There was, it is true, one period in which at least a few Christians tried to grapple with the problem of the nature and providential purpose of Islam: in the later twelfth century a group of scholars in and around the monastery of Cluny, and inspired by its abbot Peter the Venerable, translated and studied the Qur'an and other texts, and tried to grasp the way in which Muslims themselves understood their faith and the claims they made for it.

In the next century, a new challenge to the western part of the world from the Mongols had various results. Some European writers saw the Mongols as potential Christians and allies against Islam, but others became more aware of what Christianity and Islam had in common against triumphant paganism. Some writers even dared to hope that Islam was ripe for conversion, and the desire to bring the Gospel to Muslims in a persuasive way impelled Raymond Lull and others to a study of Islam and the Arabic language which had seemed unnecessary or even harmful to an earlier age faced with the prospect of unending hostility. But this moment of hope did not last long. The revival of Islamic orthodoxy, in a more intransigent form, and in reaction against its own heresies as much as against the Christian enemy, led to the squeezing and then the destruction of the Crusading states; while the first probings of Franciscan and Dominican missionaries showed how difficult, humanly speaking, the conversion of even a single Muslim would be. Thus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the impulse to know and understand Islam died out, and for a time no new effort was made to determine its place in the divine order of things.[5]

Although no new advances were to be made for a long time, those made during the 'century of reason and hope'[6] were not lost. Something of the knowledge and understanding acquired by the school of Cluny was preserved and had an influence on later thinkers. Professor Southern's book can be read most profitably together with Mr. Daniel's careful study of the achievement and limits of mediaeval European studies of Islam seen at their best.[7] The body

of knowledge built up at Cluny did, as he shows, survive as part of the mediaeval inheritance; if few made use of it, it was there to be used, and the thought which did take account of it was far superior to the suppositions of the ignorant. Thus, while accusations of idolatry were still hurled at Islam, in the hands of the learned they were literary devices rather than serious and firmly based accusations which could be defended. The learned at least knew that Islam believed in the unity of God, the existence of prophets, the revelation of a book and the divine nature of that book sent down from heaven. If they condemned Islam, they did so on grounds which seemed to them more weighty, and more consistent with what they knew, than earlier writers. In their view, Islam denied the possibility of rational argument, and gave an essential role to force and violence. (This served as the theoretical justification for the attitude which Christians in their turn adopted towards Islam: missionary endeavour, it was generally held, was hopeless unless backed by arms, and the only real solution to the problem was the destruction of Islam by the killing or conversion of Muslims). They thought of Muhammad either as a false prophet or else as no prophet at all. Either he was an evil prophet who taught falsehood, or else he was an ordinary man who did not possess the essential qualities of prophethood. Those qualities, as defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, were three: freedom from passions, the working of miracles, and the invariable truth of what the prophet said *qua* prophet. But in the eyes of mediaeval Europe Muhammad foretold nothing true, he worked no miracles, and his life was not a model of virtue. At worst he was a 'fraudulent demoniac or magician',[8] at best an impostor who claimed prophetic gifts in order to obtain power, an oppressor when he had power, a man of loose morals and a hypocrite who used religious claims to justify his immorality.

But this picture of sheer opposition should be modified in two ways. Even those who rejected the claims of Islam did not, for the most part, deny it a special theological status. The Qur'an, the immense figure of Muhammad overshadowing the world, the power of the Caliphs and the continuing strength of the Muslim states could not be explained away; they at least created a presumption that Islam had a special part to play in the divine economy.

It might be a punishment for the sins of Christendom and therefore a sign of God's chastening love; or it could be seen, in spite of its errors, as a reflection of Christian truth and therefore a witness to the truth in its own fashion. The attempt to give Islam a *droit de cité*, a theological status within the framework of Christian thought, went back as far as St. John of Damascus who, living in Syria under Umayyad rule, and knowing Arabic as well as Greek, was the first Christian theologian to study the Qur'an and grasp its meaning. His polemical writings, 'calm and charitable in tone,'[9] laid emphasis on the Christian origins of Islam, and later theologians who followed him, in the west as well as the east, saw in Islam 'a superfluous but valid witness to the truth of the Christian faith.'[10] Muhammad had mixed some truths with his falsehood. If he denied the divinity of Christ, at least he accepted the prophethood of Jesus and called him 'the word of God' and the 'spirit of God.' If the Qur'an denied the Trinity, it laid full stress on the unity of God. Thus Islam could not be regarded as sheer disbelief or blind paganism: it could be regarded as a Christian heresy, a schism, or a 'third religion' falsely claiming to have a revelation of its own and in fact reflecting something of the true revelation of Judaism and Christianity.

Moreover even those who were most strongly opposed to the claims of Islam were aware that its existence might bring certain incidental benefits. Christians could learn or profit from it: if it was a punishment for their sins, it could also be an opening for their virtues, providing an occasion for the exercise of loyalty, of penance, and of virtuous activity. But this line of argument could be prolonged in quite a different direction: if those who believed in Christian revelation could use Islam to preach a lesson, so too could those who did not really believe in revelation at all. One of the forms of mediaeval infidelity was the idea of 'three impostors,' Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, who had successively deceived the world.

Such lines of thought, laid down in the earlier Middle Ages, remained open to the traffic of human minds until the nineteenth century. But from the time of the Reformation onwards there took place a gradual change of emphasis. The rise to power of the Ottoman Empire and the renewed

threat to the safety of Christian Europe brought once more to the surface the fear of Islam which had been aroused by the first conquest. In a way the fear was greater now, because the level of political consciousness in Europe was higher, the lines of division between the two faiths were more sharply drawn, and the sudden rise of a barbarian enemy on the frontier was a more vivid threat to a society more conscious of its growing strength. That force and violence which had seemed to mediaeval Europe to be inseparable from Islam came to the front of men's minds again.

But the fear went less deep than five centuries earlier. The claims and doctrines of Islam were no longer a threat to the Christian faith, now that the faith had come to terms with Greek philosophy and created intellectual defences; Islam was no longer a heresy which was likely to win supporters nor an intellectual attack against which serious defence was necessary. Christians might be frightened of the Ottoman army, but they could look at the religion whose banner it carried with cool detachment if not with contempt. At the same time, Christendom was torn by the struggles of the Reformation, and in this context Islam appeared not just as an enemy but as a weapon of controversy and policy. Thus some Protestants thought they had something to learn from Islam: or, it would be more correct to say, thought it useful to write as if this were so. For example, Luther, although his basic attitude was one of horror (the Pope and the Turk were 'the two arch-enemies of Christ and His holy Church'),[11] nevertheless praised the simplicity of Muslim worship and customs, by contrast with those of the Catholics.[12] In the same way, Queen Elizabeth, in a letter sent with her first Ambassador to the Sultan, emphasized the Islamic nature of Protestantism.[13] No doubt the real motive in writing like this was political, the thought that the Turks might be useful allies, for Protestants could, when necessary, argue equally on the other side. The Swiss Protestant P. Vinet could depict Islam as a kind of Catholicism: Muhammad was a Christian apostate who had set himself up as the head of a Church, just as the Pope had done.[14] On the Catholic side too it was possible to reverse the picture and portray Islam as a kind of Protestantism. Thus William Rainolds, in a famous book with the significant title of

Calvino-Turcism, drew the parallels between the two false doctrines:

> ...the fundamental principles of Muhammadanism are far better than those of Calvinism. Both seek to destroy the Christian faith, both deny the Divinity of Christ, not only is the pseudo-Gospel of Calvin no better than the Qur'an of Muhammad, but in many respects it is wickeder and more repulsive.[15]

But here too it was possible, in spite of differences of religion, to hope for a profitable alliance with the Turks, and the French King in fact achieved it in 1535.

That Islam could be considered in fundamentally political terms shows both the seriousness of the political danger it presented and a change of attitude in Europe. Political thought was moving away from theological determinants, but theology also was moving away from problems to which the claims of Islam were relevant. When the great subjects of controversy were the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, Islam might have something to say; but it had nothing relevant to say about the specifically Christian problems of grace, of redemption, of faith and works. After the Reformation, the theological problem of the nature and status of Islam sinks into the backgroud. When it is raised, it is raised not for its own sake, out of a deep desire to explain, but for polemical purposes, to point a contrast with Christianity. For Pascal, Muhammad is the opposite to Jesus Christ. He killed, where Christ's people were killed; he prevented his adherents from reading, where Christ's apostles ordered them to read; he succeeded humanly where Christ perished; and indeed since Muhammad succeeded it was necessary for Christ to perish.[16] Nothing he did needs more than a human explanation; 'tout homme peut faire ce qu'a fait Mahomet; car il n'a point fait de miracles, il n'a point été prédit.'[17] He is 'sans autorité... il est ridicule.'[18] At the end of the seventeenth century, Prideaux, writing a once famous life of the prophet, calls it 'the nature of imposture fully display'd in the life of Mahomet.'[19] Like Pascal, his object is 'to point the contrast between Islam and Christianity', the one purely human, the other of divine origin; and, by showing how far the

human falls short of the divine, to defend Christianity against the fashionable Deism of his time.[20]

But if Islam was regarded as purely human, it could at least attract the interest of the new secular culture which was concerned with human things as such, which took all knowledge for its province, studied the multiplicity of existing things and hoped to order them in accordance with principles. In the older study of Islam and things Arabic, the desire to know had been mixed with other motives: to acquire, by the study of Semitic grammar or antiquities, a better understanding of the Biblical texts, or to convert Muslims. Something of this remained, and the old fear and horror of Islam still cast its shadow across Islamic studies when other eastern faiths and cultures were regarded with a new tolerance. But here too the curiosity of the secular intellect made its mark and a new kind of Orientalism began to appear. New, more accurate translations of the Qur'an were made: that of Maracci into Latin in 1698, that of Sale into English in 1734. Manuscripts were collected and carefully studied, and painstaking examinations of Islamic history for its own sake were made: Pococke's *Specimen Historiae Arabum*, Ockley's *History of the Saracens*.

The secular thinkers of the new age too could take a new interest in Islam, and some at least of them drew on the works of the Orientalists. Muhammad was no longer anti-Christ but a man who had played a certain part in history; Islam was no longer the work of the Devil but a historical phenomenon of which the causes and nature could be rationally discussed. The creation and maintenance of the Caliphate might furnish lessons for those who wished to understand how states and societies were formed and held together.

Thus Islam appears as a minor theme at least in the work of most of the thinkers of the eighteenth century, but there is no consensus of opinion about it. For Voltaire, Muhammad was 'un sublime et hardi charlatan,' and the Qur'an, although it gave laws which were good for its time and place, was 'une déclamation incohérante et ridicule.'[21] In his play, *Le Fanatisme ou Mohamet le Prophète*, Muhammad appears as the model of the world-shaking impostor

...né
Pour changer l'univers à ses pieds consterné[22]

and conscious of the nature of his own aims and deeds:

> Dieu, que j'ai fait servir au malheur des humains,
> Adorable instrument de mes affreux desseins,
> Toi que j'ai blasphemé, mais que je crains encore,
> Je me sens condamné, quand l'univers m'adore.
> Je brave en vain les traits dont je me sens frapper.
> J'ai trompé les mortels, et ne puis me tromper.[23]

In Diderot's *Encyclopédie* also, the triumph of Islam is ascribed to conscious imposture:

> Après avoir connu le caractère de ses concitoyens, leur ignorance, leur crédulité, et leur disposition à l'enthousiasme, il vit qu'il pouvait s'ériger en prophete, il feignit des révélations, il parla...[24]

But there was an opposing current, of those who thought of the spread of Islam as an extraordinary achievement which needed a more profound explanation. For Leibnitz, Islam spread because it was a form of natural theology, which the followers of Muhammad were able to carry even among the remote races of Asia and Africa, whither Christianity had not been brought, and which destroyed heathen superstitions contrary to the true doctrine of the unity of God and the immortality of souls.[25] Rousseau praised in early Islam the close union between the theological and political systems; it did not possess, as did Christianity, the fatal division of the two powers, although this was to come later when the Arabs were subjugated by barbarians.[26] Condorcet was more favourable still. The character of Muhammad united burning enthusiasm, astuteness, the qualities of a poet and a warrior. His aim was primarily political, to unite the Arab tribes into a single community; and the creation of a purified religion was the first step to this end. In the State which he founded there was for a time freedom of thought and a revival of the Greek sciences, although later this was extinguished by the rise of religious despotism.[27]

Similarly, the Comte de Boulainvilliers, in a famous life of Muhammad, contrasted the natural religion which was Islam with the claims of Christianity, but gave the founder of Islam full credit for his natural virtues and talents. There is no convincing evidence, he asserts, that Muhammad had

the gift of prophecy or that his supposed relevation was a real one. His aims were primarily political, and he chose to create a new religion to carry out his political designs rather than use the Christian religion because of its abuses at that time. The religion which he created was the product of his own mind; but since his gifts were unusual — art, delicacy, resolution, intrepidity equal to those of Alexander or Caesar, and liveliness of imagination — the product was good:

> ...sans la grace de la Révélation chrétienne, qui nous éclaire bien au-delà de ce que Mahomed a voulu connoître et savoir, il n'y auroit sistème de Doctrine si plausible que le sien, si conforme aux lumières de la Raison, si consolant pour les Justes, et si terrible aux pécheurs volontaires ou inapliquez.'[28]

The laws and practices of his religion he largely drew from the common customs of the Arabians; and, although the Arabs were hard, cruel, and scornful of all those things which other people love, they were also 'spirituels, généreux, desinteressés, braves, prudents.'[29] (His feeling for Islam may even have been more favourable than these statements imply. In spite of a prudent profession of faith in the Christian revelation Boulainvilliers' attitude to religion seems to have been that of a philosophical deist. Human reason alone is capable of discerning what is true or false, in the doctrinal as in the moral sphere; the true function of religion is to satisfy the heart and to prevent the aberrations of human curiosity. Seen in this light Islam has much to admire, because of its simple, clear and rational nature.)[30]

These thinkers judge Islam as a human, and mainly a political, phenomenon; and it was fitting that the greatest empire-builder of the age should pay his tribute to a precursor. Napoleon had seen Islamic society at first hand in Egypt; he had studied the Qur'an and the life of the prophet, and had even made profession of faith in Islam; until the end of his life he liked to think about his Egyptian episode and all that was connected with it. In exile at St. Helena, he took strong issue with Voltaire's version. Voltaire, he declared, had prostituted the character of Muhammad and made a great man who had changed the face of the world act like a vile criminal. There was much that was legendary in

the biographies, but one thing was certain: the conquest of the world in such a short time. This had to be explained, and it was not easy to explain it in terms of fanaticism or of fortuitous circumstances. There must be, behind all this, 'quelque chose que nous ignorons.'[31]

In such a statement we can see a reformulation of the mystery of Islam in secular terms. But statements like this, motivated simply by the desire to know and understand, were still rare, and even among writers who made use of the greater knowledge of Islam now available, there was often to be heard a polemical note, although polemical in a different way: it was no longer aimed at Islam itself, but through Islam at enemies nearer home, at the claims of the Catholic Church or of revealed religion. Thus for Gibbon Islam was an object-lesson in the way in which the rational can be dominated by fanaticism and so lead to imposture. At the heart of Islam there lay a rational system of belief: the God of Muhammad was the god of the philosophers —

> an infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by necessity of his own nature, and deriving from himself all moral and intellectual perfection.[32]

This idea was conceived by reason, and a 'philosophic Atheist' might subscribe to it. But the descent was easy, and the philosopher became a self-deceived prophet:

> The energy of a mind incessantly bent on the same object would convert a general object into a particular call; the warm suggestions of the understanding or the fancy would be felt as the inspiration of heaven; the labour of thought would expire in rapture and vision; and the inward sensation, the invisible monitor would be described with the form and attribute of an angel of God. From enthusiasm to imposture the step is perilous and slippery... how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud.[33]

Worse still, once the philosopher had become a preacher, the preacher became a prince and a leader of armies, and his character was gradually stained; nevertheless, he showed great gifts as such, and it is to them, rather than to any miraculous element, that his successes must be ascribed.

The permanence of his religion too must be explained by human factors: by the skill of the Caliphs in keeping the sacerdotal as well as the regal power in their hands and preventing the growth of an independent clergy. On balance the effects of his rule were beneficial; idolatry was replaced by a more human devotion, the spirit of charity and friendship was spread, revenge and oppression were checked.[34]

II

In this thousand-year-long process of thought, there is one factor which is almost constant. The attitude of western Europe towards Islam is one of judgement. Islam is being weighed in the balance against something other than itself, being assigned a place in a scale. The measure of judgement may have changed: as we have seen, there was an undercurrent of European thought, beginning in the Middle Ages but growing more powerful in the eighteenth century, which used its judgement on Islam as an indirect condemnation of Christianity and of all religions which claim to be revealed. But by and large it was the opposite: Islam was judged by believing Christians, and judged as not being Christianity, as being in some ways the antithesis of Christianity. Even those who, like Condorcet or Napoleon, placed a high value on the human powers of Muhammad and his human success, also took it for granted that nothing more than human was there: that Muhammad's claim to be a prophet and the Qur'an's claim to be the word of God were false.

In the course of time, as we have seen, this process of judgement had been permeated by something else: by a process of study and understanding of what Islam was in itself. By the end of the eighteenth century, this increased understanding of Islam had affected the judgement passed on Islam by the secular thinkers. But it had scarcely yet affected those who thought within the framework of orthodox Christianity: in other words, those who accepted Christian doctrine, in its traditional formulations, as stating the complete and final truth about the universe, and asked what was the status of Islam inside the Christian system of ideas. Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century,

those who thought in such terms either did not consider Islam at all or else were satisfied to regard it as being not Christianity, or even the opposite of Christianity, without trying to answer in depth the question of what it was in itself.

For example, Schlegel in his *Philosophy of History* stated what was basically a traditional view even if the language in which he clothed it was the new language of historical 'movements.' He drew a sharp contrast between the two great tribal movements which between them broke up the classical civilization. On the one hand stood the German tribal movements which accepted Christianity and were essentially conducive to peace and civilization; on the other, the Arab tribal movement which expressed itself in the rise of Islam. This was animated in its early phase by a certain moral energy and strength of character, but it was directed by the 'tribal spirit' of the Arabs, by their passions of pride and hatred, of anger and revenge, and these passions were not held in check, on the contrary they were strengthened and used, by Islam. Islam was 'a religion of empty arrogance and senseless pride', preached by a 'prophet of unbelief.' Its positive content was no more than the 'natural religion' to which all men can attain by reason, and it missed all the elements of salvation – reconciliation, mercy, love, happiness. It had therefore produced no civilization: its system of rule was 'an anti-Christian combination of spiritual and temporal authority, which had reduced mankind to a horrible state of degradation, and in its destructive enthusiasm it had removed all recollection of antiquity in the countries it had conquered and every vestige of a higher and better civilization.[35]

In a more subtle way a similar contrast was drawn by Newman in a book deservedly little-known, *Lectures on the History of the Turks*. For Newman, Islam is a religious imposture, but it might have been worse. It is a great improvement on paganism, for it believes in 'one God, the fact of His Revelation, His faithfulness to His promises, the eternity of the moral law, the certainty of future retribution.'[36] Those ideas it had borrowed from Christianity, but with them it had mixed an error of its own, 'a consecration of the principle of nationalism'.[37] In a sense it had denied its own universal mission: its empire built on faith

turned in on itself with pride, and what could have been a universal religion became a national one 'closely connected with the sentiments of patriotism, family honour, loyalty towards the past, and party spirit.'[38] It thus stands somewhere between 'the religion of God and the religion of devils.'[39] In the beginning it might have done the work of God. The Caliphate indeed was a genuinely civilized state: that is to say, it had as its common good a principle which ordered society, whereas a barbarian state has as its common good something (whether a faith, a dynasty, or the desire for fame) which can generate feeling but cannot order society; and it was built on a common rational discipline able to organize the conscience, affections, and passions. But not so the Turks who succeeded the Caliphs: in spite of certain original virtues (valour, truthfulness, a sense of justice, sobriety and gentleness) they were essentially barbarians. They had no interior life, no rational principles and no intellectual discipline. They had added nothing to Islam and given no help to Christianity. They could have placed their barbarian virtues at the service of the truth: in the eleventh century they had to choose whether to turn westwards or eastwards, to oppose God or Satan. They had made the wrong choice, and since the Seljuks the Turks 'have been the great anti-Christ among the races of men'.[40]

In Schlegel's sharp contrast between the two tribal movements we can see an early expression of that racial theory which was to be an important strand in nineteenth century thought; just as in Newman's we can perhaps hear an echo of the conviction of nineteenth century Europe that it was the vanguard of human progress. But fundamentally they were writing as Christians. A view such as theirs is consistent with, although it is not necessarily implied by, the beliefs of Christianity; and it is perfectly compatible with doing justice to the purely human achievements of the prophet and his followers. A responsible Christian scholar, who takes Islam not just as a weapon with which to beat his opponents but as an object of thought in its own right, would probably phrase his judgement with more reservations than Schlegel and Newman, but he would be entitled to hold a view not fundamentally different from theirs. Thus Sir William Muir, whose books on Muhammad and the Caliphate are still not quite superseded, could regard the prophet as the

Devil's instrument, and the society he created as barren and bound to remain so. In his view, Islam was stationary; it confounded the secular and the spiritual and so could not know real freedom; it had no middle path between absolute monarchy and the licence of a lawless soldiery; at its highest, its civilization could be neither stable nor lasting because it had never penetrated the life of the family.[41] In the teaching of Islam there were indeed certain truths, but even they were an obstacle to the penetration of the Truth itself:

> there is in it just so much truth, truth borrowed from previous revelations yet cast in another mould, as to direct attention from the need for more... the sword of Muhammad, and the Kor'ān, are the most stubborn enemies of Civilisation, Liberty, and the Truth which the world has yet known.[42]

A greater Orientalist, the Jesuit Henri Lammens, could regard Islam, its prophet and the Arabs with a distaste even more total and unmasked. The rise of Islam, in his view, was an unfortunate historical accident which had engulfed the peoples of Syria and other countries, and against which they had struggled with more or less success. At the beginning, the prophet had had a kind of sincerity; if his 'revelations' were the result of auto-suggestion, at least he himself had believed in them. But later even this ceased to be so, and in the Medinese period 'le Qoraišite calculateur'[43] had finally overcome the prophet. (But it may have been this harsh judgement which enabled Lammens to distinguish so clearly certain important aspects of early Islamic history: to show for example the importance of the urban and trading milieu in which Islam arose in moulding its development; and to detect beneath the surface of unity the resistance of certain indigenous traditions — a resistance which, in Syria, expressed itself both inside Islam, in the rise of the Umayyads, and outside it in the survival of the Christian personality of pre-Islamic Syria in the valleys of Lebanon).[44]

Such views are typical of the attitude of orthodox Christian thought towards Islam in the nineteenth century. Even when thinkers know as much about Islam as Muir and Lammens, and still more when they knew as little as

Schlegel and Newman, they tended to put it somewhere near the bottom of the scale of human faiths. The human mind, like the conscience, cannot easily be aroused by all problems at all times, and the problems which faced western Christian thought throughout the nineteenth century were not those of the Middle Ages. On the one hand, Islam presented no real political challenge. Politicians, it is true, might sometimes use the language of the Crusades to justify what they proposed to do for other reasons, and even in our own time a French Prime Minister, seeking to justify the deposition of the Sultan of Morocco, did so on the ground that he preferred the Cross to the Crescent; but in general the world of Islam could be regarded as a quaking jelly which would slip into the hands of the European powers without difficulty. Nor was Islam a theological challenge. Its theology was scarcely known and so far as known did not seem formidable: it no longer came to Europe linked, as in the system of Averroes, with philosophical ideas which Christian thinkers had either to disprove or to reconcile with their own faith; it had nothing to say in the great controversies which shook western Christendom in this age, about the nature of the Church, and the reconciliation of Christian doctrine with the claims of modern science.

It was only rarely that Christians thinking in the framework of the traditional formulations of the faith saw that, even if Islam did not help to answer the theological questions which absorbed their age, it did pose questions of its own. One of these rare exceptions was C. Forster who, in *Mahometanism Unveiled*, tried to resolve the problem posed by the close parallels between Islam and Christianity. They were too close, he maintained, to be dismissed as mere coincidence. Both were alike in the abstract nature of their doctrines, the simplicity of their rites, and the supernatural or prophetic character assumed by their founders. Both rose abruptly from obscure origins, faced the same type of obstacle in their early period, but in spite of this spread rapidly and far and established a permanent domination over the human mind. The success of neither can be explained in purely human terms, for the attempt to do so would raise the question:

by what blind fortune, what mysterious chance, have so

> many independent and unconnected causes been brought thus to concur?[45]

For Islam as for Christianity, this question can only be answered in one way — in terms of

> the interposition... of the special and superintending providence of God... the agency of a controlling and directing Providence.[46]

What can this Providence be, so far as Islam is concerned? It is the fulfilment of the promise made by God to Abraham in respect of Ishmael and his descendents. The promises of God to the Jews came through Isaac, those to the Arabs came through Ishmael, and while the former culminated in Christ, the latter culminated in Muhammad. Through Isaac laws and religion were given to a large part of the world, through Ishmael to an even larger part.

But though the parallel goes so far, it goes no farther. Isaac was the legitimate son of Abraham and through him came forth the legitimate faith, while Ishmael the illegitimate son brought forth a spurious faith. This view might seem to contradict itself: how could Muhammad have been sent by Providence, but sent to preach a spurious faith? To this Forster replies that the providential purpose of Islam is a negative one only. It was sent to purge the world of the evils of idolatry: when Muhammad came Christianity and Judaism were both corrupt, Christianity by the worship of idols and Judaism by the search for an earthly kingdom contrary to the promises made to the Jews. Islam purged Christianity of its corruptions, and the temporal goods which the Jews wrongly sought Islam rightly obtained in accordance with the promise made to it. Now that this negative purpose has been fulfilled, what will happen to Islam? In the end, Forster believes, Muslims will be converted to Christianity, and this should not even be too difficult: the 'favourable prepossessions and established doctrines'[47] of Islam will make the approach to their conversion easy, and the Arabic language, prevalent throughout so much of Asia and Africa, can be an important instrument of conversion — like Greek and Latin, it is providentially designed to prepare the way for the final triumph of the Gospel. But for this a new approach will be necessary, one based

on a consciousness of the benefits brought by Islam to mankind —

> it is only by fairly acknowledging what they have, that we can hope to make them sensible of what they have not.[48]

Such rare and indeed eccentric thinkers apart, the problem of Islam aroused scarcely an echo in the western Christian mind until the turn of the century, when we can see the beginnings of a new questioning fed from many different sources. One of them was the sheer weight of knowledge about Islam and other religions gradually accumulated by scholars, missionaries, colonial officials and travellers. In the face of this knowledge, it was necessary to admit that there was more to study in Islam than had been thought; if it was to be condemned as falsehood it could only be in a more elaborate and complex way, and one which understood, evaluated and refuted rather than simply condemning. This gave rise also to a new awareness among Christians of sensitive conscience that those outside the Church could not simply be dismissed, without further qualification, as benighted pagans: to do so was to ignore the positive values which were clearly present in their religions, the human virtues which could spring from them, and the possibilities of salvation they might contain. Such questions must at least be asked, and even if they were answered in the negative, and Islam were treated as wholly false and evil, a further problem remained: the great development of historical thought in this age, reflected in the Christian consciousness, produced a new awareness that the process of preaching the gospel to the whole world was a process in time and one which would only be completed in the fullness of time:[49] the resistance of Islam to Christian penetration — more than that, the strength of Islam as a rival to Christianity — posed not only problems of missionary strategy but one more fundamental, of whether after all the spread and persistence of Islam might not have some meaning or at least be used for some purpose.

To such factors we must however add another, of a kind which cannot be explained in terms of anything except itself: the disturbing impact of a mind of total originality and unusual force, that of Louis Massignon.[50] His thought

about Islam begins from that point at which his own life was transformed: a sudden apprehension of the existence of God and of a debt owed to Him, at a moment of imprisonment and despair in Iraq in 1908. The experience had come to him in a Muslim country, through the medium of Arabic, the language of Islam, and perhaps it was this which gave him the abiding sense of the divine origin of Islam which posed the problems to which he remained faithful for more than another half century of life. If Islam was of divine origin, how could it have diverged from the fullness of truth revealed in Christ? If it had diverged, could it still be a channel of salvation?

The beginnings of an answer Massignon found where he found the whole meaning of history: in those 'hauts lieux de la prière'[51] where God had revealed Himself and the prophets had spoken. Islam began where Judaism and Christianity began, with God speaking to Abraham and Abraham responding to God's call. It diverged (as Forster had suggested two generatons earlier) when the line of Abraham split between Isaac and Ishmael, with the exclusion of Ishmael from the covenant given to Abraham and his seed. But the exclusion could not be complete: the covenant still stood, the seed of Ishmael could still claim their share of it promised in *Genesis*, and Islam was sent as a consolation to the excluded, an assurance that they were not forgotten. But the revelation to Muhammad was more than this, it contained values of its own. Against the corruptions of Christianity and Judaism, the Qur'an teaches the transcendence of God — the source of all reality, the destroyer of idols — and the unity of all believers in His worship:

> A sa seconde prière, à Berséba, 'puits du serment,' où Dieu lui impose l'expatriement 'l'hégire' de son premier-né, Ismael, Abraham consent à son exil au désert; pourvu que sa descendance y survive, douée par Dieu dans le monde d'une certaine pérennité privilégiée, marquant cette race, ismaelienne, arabe, d'une vocation, l'épée, 'le fer à la puissance acérée' (Q. 57,25) qui suspend sa menace, une fois l'Islam formé, sur tous les idolâtres ; à qui la guerre sainte est déclarée, implacable, tant qu'ils ne confesseront pas qu'il n'y a qu'un Dieu, celui d'Abra-

ham: 'le premier Musulman'... L'histoire de la race arabe commence avec les larmes d'Agar, les premières dans l'Écriture. L'arabe est la langue des larmes: de ceux qui savent que Dieu, dans son essence, est inaccessible et que tout est bien ainsi. S'Il vient en nous, c'est comme un Etranger, qui rompt notre vie normale à la manière d'un intervalle délassant du travail; et Il passe. Quelques-uns, approfondissant l'offrande d'Arafât, y trouvent une route vers l'Union, mais seuls, et dans la nuit.

Parce que l'Islam, venu après Moise et Jésus, avec le prophète Muhammad, annonciateur négatif du Jugement de mort qui atteindra tout le créé — constitue une réponse mystérieuse de la grâce à la prière d'Abraham pour Ismael et les Arabes: 'Je t'ai aussi exaucé' (pour Ismael). L'Islam arabe n'est pas une revendication désespérée d'exclus qui sera rejetée jusqu'à la fin, et son infiltration mystérieuse en Terre Sainte le laisse entendre. L'Islam a même une mission positive: en reprochant à Israel de se croire privilégié, au point d'attendre un Messie né dans sa race, de David, selon une paternité charnelle. Il affirme qu'il y est déjà né, méconnu, d'une maternité virginale prédestinée, que c'est Jésus fils de Marie, et qu'il reviendra à la fin des temps, en signe du Jugement.[52]

This uniqueness of God is indeed the great abiding message of Islam, just as its art

> ne cherche pas à imiter le Créateur dans ses œuvres par le relief et le volume des formes, mais l'évoque, par son absence même, dans une présentation fragile, inachevée, périssable comme un voile, qui souligne simplement, avec une résignation sereine le passage fugitif de ce qui périt, et tout est périssable 'excepté son visage.'[53]

The Qur'an can therefore be the starting point of a spiritual meditation which may in the end lead the Muslim to the fullness of truth. This indeed is the 'intention maîtresse'[54] of the covenant given to Ishmael, and it must be so, for otherwise the consolation would have been a cheat. It is a way which has been followed by those who, starting from the Qur'an, have sought to interiorize the system of precepts and laws which it contains, and give them a firm root in the heart and mind: above all by the mystics, those

who seek for 'la prise de l'homme par Dieu.' In opposition to those who regard mysticism as something brought into Islam from outside, Massignon thought of it as produced by an inner logic, as being indeed the necessary consequence of taking Islam seriously. It is by the mystics that the potentialities of the Qur'an have been developed, and by them that a new vision of the unity of God and of the union of men with God has been achieved; just as it is by the invisible hierarchy of mystic saints that the coherence of Islamic society has been maintained.

But somewhere on the way which starts from the Qur'an, the seeker after union must pass beyond Islam. If men could reach the fullness of truth through the Qur'an alone, then the death of Christ would also have been a cheat. In reaching the point of mystical vision, Islam becomes something other than itself: the law is superseded, the Ka'ba becomes only a symbol, and the figure of Muhammad is replaced as the norm of sainthood by that of al-Hallaj, the mystic condemned to death at Baghdad in 922, and behind whom there appears that of Christ, *al-insan al-kamil*, the perfect man.[55] In reaching its goal, Islam has also retraced its steps to the point from which it started, to that 'haut lieu' which is at once a place of pilgrimage and a point of return to Abraham to whom God first gave the covenant; and at this point Islam is no longer the excluded brother, it is part of the alliance with God given in Christ.

This vision of the redemption of Islam, urged in language of great beauty, and not only in words but in acts — of pilgrimage and of political protest, wherever the human dignity of Muslims seemed to him threatened — has left its mark on French life, and on its literature, its theology and its missions as well as its Islamic scholarship. If it is possible for Mr. Daniel to say that 'the present phase of Islamic studies is in the hands of active Christian believers,'[56] it is partly because of Massignon. After him, a group of scholars have tried, whilst not obscuring the final differences between Islam and Christianity, to disentangle within Islam the secret paths which might lead the Muslim to the fullness of truth. Among them we may name several priests of Arab origin, and for whom therefore there is posed inescapably the problem of 'baptizing' the Arabic language and its culture, or, to put it in other words, of creating a

Christian culture in a language sacred to another religion, and moulded by that fact. Thus Father Moubarac, carrying further a favourite theme of Massignon, has interpreted Islam as an attempt to return to the pure monotheistic religion of Abraham the common ancestor, and a conscious attempt, for in the Qur'an itself Abraham appears as the type of the believer, the founder of true religion.[57] Father Hayek, following another hint, finds between Islam and Christianity not so much a common ancestor as something of a shared content: Muslims revere Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and look forward to the return of Jesus, 'le justiciaire ultime' at the end of time. Although not enough to make Islam a kind of Christianity, this is enough to make friendship possible between Muslims and Christians.[58] In a similar way, Father Abdel-Jalil, himself not only of Arab but of Muslim origin, has laid emphasis on the reverence given in Islam to the Virgin Mary.[59] (But ideas such as these, if not handled with great caution, may lead to a certain ambiguity of theological position, to a view of Islam as an alternative line of salvation, an authentic prophetic religion, and even a kind of concealed Christianity).[60]

Standing in a rather different relationship to Massignon are two French Catholic scholars, J. Jomier and L. Gardet. Perhaps they would not have written as they have had Massignon not done his work; but what they have written is rooted in a different doctrinal soil, in the revived Thomist tradition of modern France, and is the product of a different and more cautious temper of mind. The work of Gardet, sometimes in collaboration with Father Anawati, has been devoted primarily to a careful examination of different aspects of Islamic civilization and thought, bringing out the systematic differences from Christianity and relating them to differences of fundamental theological position;[61] while Jomier has made an equally careful and cautious examination of the Biblical elements in the Qur'an and of the very different ways in which Islam understands them. In Christianity, the idea of revelation is linked with that of progress, in Islam not — there is simply an underlying natural religion, recalled by the prophets from time to time —; in Christianity, the idea of the supernatural is that of a participation in the life of God, in Islam there remains

a separation; the Islamic conception of Jesus contains no idea of Incarnation, of Crucifixion, or of redemption, for salvation comes directly from God. Yet Jomier warns against building on these differences and resemblances either a doctrine of equivalence or one of total rejection:

> Certains chrétiens, en effet, préconisent un effort pour interpréter les passages-clefs de la christologie coranique à une lumière purement chrétienne, afin de mieux montrer toutes les richesses qu'ils pourraient contenir. Et comme des passages isolés supportent facilement une interprétation lorsqu'on les tire de leur contexte, ils pensent qu'une telle entreprise se justifie. Personnellement, pour l'instant, nous ne pensons pas en avoir le droit. Un fait nous frappe: pour des millions de musulmans, le Coran représente un Évangile de salut, bien distinct du nôtre et qui se présente comme achevé dans sa ligne. Ils prennent à la lettre l'enseignement général du Coran et voient la christologie à sa lumière.
>
> Il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'il suffit de voir la réalité une fois pour toutes sans illusions; et, pour éviter de se blesser mutuellement, mieux vaut ensuite rechercher les points sur lesquels nous sommes d'accord. Nous avons en commun avec les musulmans le souci d'obéir pleinement à la volonté de Dieu, de ne rien dire qui aille contre la raison, même si parfois la révélation en depasse les forces; nous croyons à l'Unité de Dieu, au fait qu'Il a parlé par les prophètes. Et c'est déjà beaucoup. Peut-être un des points les plus importants ensuite se trouvera-t-il dans l'explication du message de Jésus tel qu'il a été réellement transmis à ses disciples. Le jour où nos positions sur l'authenticité de la Bible et l'authenticité de son interprétation seront comprises, bien des difficultés pour le dialogue tomberont. Le problème de l'authenticité de la Bible reste jusqu'à nouvel ordere un problème crucial dans la question des rapports entre chrétiens et musulmans.[62]

New formulations of this kind have become, it is not too much to say, the new orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, and their influence is clearly to be seen in the formulations of the Vatican Council, formulations which, while passing

no judgement on the claim of Muslims that Muhammad was the mouthpiece of a divine revelation, recognize those elements in what he preached which Christians can accept, and which can serve as a basis for cooperation in the natural order:

> L'Église regarde aussi avec estime les musulmans, qui adorent le Dieu Un, vivant et subsistant, miséricordieux et tout-puissant, créateur du ciel et de la terre, qui a parlé aux hommes. Ils cherchent à se soumettre de toute leur âme aux décrets de Dieu, même s'ils sont cachés, comme s'est soumis à Dieu Abraham, auquel la foi islamique se réfère volontiers. Bien qu'ils ne reconnaissent pas Jésus comme Dieu, ils le vénèrent comme prophète; ils honorent sa Mère virginale, Marie, et parfois même l'invoquent avec piété. De plus, ils attendent le jour du jugement, où Dieu rétribuera tous les hommes ressuscités. Aussi ont-ils en estime la vie morale et rendent-ils un culte à Dieu, surtout par la prière, l'aumône et le jeûne.
>
> Si, au cours des siècles, de nombreuses dissensions et inimitiés se sont manifestées entre les chrétiens et les musulmans, le Concile les exhorte tous à oublier le passé et à s'efforcer sincèrement à la compréhension mutuelle, ainsi qu'à protéger et à promouvoir ensemble, pour tous les hommes, la justice sociale, les valeurs morales, la paix et la liberté.[63]

It is not in the Roman Catholic Church alone that this new approach to Islam is to be found. In the Anglican Church also a similar concern with the theology of missions, and a similar desire for respect and friendship in the truth, have thrown up an analogous movement of thought. In the works of Canon Cragg there is no concealment of difference: Islam is not Christianity, but it can, so to speak, be 'prolonged' in the direction of Christianity. The basic concepts of Islam pose problems which can only be resolved by the doctrine of the Incarnation. In the Islamic notions of *shirk* (the attribution to others of that which God alone possesses), of *islam* (the recognition of God's authority), of the community under divine law, and of the state as the instrument of faith — in all these there lies a gap between God and man which only a divine initiative can bridge.[64]

Such Christian attitudes towards Islam as we have sketched

here have become the orthodoxy of to-day. But they are by no means unchallenged: against the type of thought which originates with Massignon there can be set another which also springs from a man of unusual force of mind, and which denies the bases of the Massignonian view. In a number of works far apart in time, the Calvinist theologian Hendrik Kraemer has looked at Islam from an angle different both from Massignon's and from older formulations against which Massignon reacted.

It is true, Kraemer also begins with the drawing of a line between the Revelation of Christ and the teaching of Islam, but it is a different line. Underlying Kraemer's thought is a Calvinist view of the relations between the natural and supernatural very different from the view of Catholic theology, and the line which he draws does not run between the Islamic and another religious system which is thereby contrasted with it: it runs between all religious systems, including the Christian on the one side and the Revelation of God in Christ on the other. The fundamental distinction is not between the Muslim and the Christian ways of thinking and living, but rather between Revelation and all religious systems constructed by human reason: or, as Kraemer himself expresses it, between what God thinks of men and what men think of God.[65] Revelation is a spontaneous act of God, springing from His sole initiative, and the only authentic response to it is faith. But religions, although they may be rooted in 'a primordial decision and act of faith,'[66] are human creations made by human initiative. They *may* contain a reflection of the revelation of God in Christ; they *may* produce order, culture, solidarity, transcendent ideals, and an awareness of man's calling in the world. But fundamentally they still belong to the world of unredeemed man, longing and groping for God but not yet re-created in His image:

> Man wants God, but somehow he wants Him in his own way... Nowhere do we find a radical repudiation of every possible man-made spiritual world.[67]

It follows from this that there can be no gradual transition from a man-made religion to faith, for faith means a radical break with the past; and the non-Christian religions cannot be regarded as in any sense an evangelical prepa-

ration. Even if they contain elements of truth, it is still impossible to be sure that it is precisely those elements which God will use in order to bring men near Him. He may use that which the builders have rejected: and what seems most noble and truthful may in fact be not a step towards faith but a stumbling block:

> The mystic who triumphantly realizes his essential oneness with God, or the World-Order, or the Divine, knowing himself in serene equanimity the supreme master of the universe or of his own destiny... commits in this sublime way the root-sin of mankind — 'to be like God.' In other words: he repeats the Fall.[68]

By what may seem a paradox, this total rejection of all man-made religious systems may make it possible to see them with peculiar clarity. They can be seen and studied and understood as products of the human mind, without being set in judgement on one another. For Kraemer, there is no need to condemn Islam because it is not Christianity, or to think of it as an unsuccessful attempt to be Christianity. To some extent indeed it *is* a modified reflex of Judaism and Christianity, but from the beginning it had an independent self-consciousness. It can therefore be regarded as a separate creation of the human mind and is itself the creator not only of abstract ideas but of a whole way of life, a culture and civilization, a society and state. As such, it has a special and complex relation with Christian culture, a mixture of 'kinship and deep difference and animosity'.[69] Compared with the 'cosmic naturalism' of the eastern religions, with their search for a harmony of man, nature and cosmos, Islam and Christianity stand together in their belief that there is a gulf between God and the world and therefore a basic disharmony in the life of man.[70] But although they belong to the same family the meaning they give to what seem to be the same concepts is very different. In Kraemer's view, Islam is a fundamentally simple religion with a superficial understanding of its own concepts. Its idea of revelation is mechanical: the Word became book and not flesh, the content of revelation is 'a set of immutable divine words that take the place of God's movable acts and His speaking and doing through the living man Jesus Christ.' Its conception of sin and salvation is clumsy: there is no

drama of salvation between God and the world, only an ethic of obedience to the God of omnipotence. Its unsurpassed apprehension of the majesty of God — Allah, white-hot majesty, omnipotence and uniqueness, whose personality evaporates and vanishes in the burning heat of His aspects — deprives man of his personality: he is personified surrender and nothing else. Islam again, according to Kraemer, has no mysticism of its own, only one brought in by Christian converts. Its intellectual development, which reached its height with al-Ghazali, was strangled by the Muslim view of revelation and by the domination of the 'masses,' for one of the special characteristics of Islam is the strength of its solidarity: the aim of Muhammad was not only to preach religion but to found a community, so that Islam from the beginning has been a theocracy, although a secularized one. All this shows that the concepts which Islam affirms are not just Christian 'half-truths;' in spite of the kinship, they have a wholly different character and tendency.[71]

III

Such new views of Islam came late in our period, and are only now beginning to have an influence on those who can accept traditional formulations of the Christian faith. But long before orthodoxy began to see the relevance of Islam, and of other faiths, to the essential problems of Christianity, the existence of non-Christian beliefs had become relevant to another stream of religious thought which, in the course of the century, moved towards a new kind of formulation of Christian faith, or of faith in general. At the basis of this formulation lies a clear distinction between the divine and human elements of religion. There is a God who has created human beings and sustains them; and a divine revelation, that is to say, some spontaneous communication of God's will, by God's initiative, to individual human beings. But the concepts, the symbols, the 'metaphors' through which this revelation are publicly expressed are human, are indeed a human response to the reality of the divine intervention. They can and must be judged by human criteria — by whether they express that reality as truthfully and fittingly as human language can —; in the end they always fall short

— the expression is never perfect, it needs to be reshaped again and again.

Behind such formulations lies a long development of thought. It would be profitable although difficult to investigate its origins, but there is no need here to trace it back beyond the beginning of that great movement of the western spirit which took as its task to order all that can be known into systems of thought, and thus produced the great scientific disciplines of the nineteenth century — geology, biology, anthropology, mythology, historiography —; but which led also to a radical questioning of the possibility of certainty, springing perhaps from other sources but given its distinctive shape by the vast extension in knowledge of the variety of human beliefs. Already, before the great development of historiography in the nineteenth century, Kant had made the essential distinction between religion and faiths. There is 'only one (true) religion: but there are faiths of several kinds.'[72] True religion consists in establishing the purity of the moral law as the supreme ground of all our maxims; in the idea of a mankind morally perfected and represented in our consciousness in the form of a perfect Man (whether this perfect Man actually existed is irrelevant — what is important is that the idea of him should be present in our minds); and in regarding all human duties as divine commands, coming from God as 'the lawgiver universally to be honoured.'[73] These duties, conceived as laws of God, can be known by reason, and therefore known by all men; but there may be other, less important laws, which cannot be known by reason but only through revelation. These, however, are secondary only and not binding on all men absolutely; they are binding only conditionally, *if* we wish to honour God in a Church. Whether these conditional laws of particular churches or faiths are really revealed by God is impossible to judge: it cannot be asserted with assurance, but it would be wrong to deny that it may be so. (Among such faiths, Kant did not in fact have a high regard for Islam: its paradise, he thought was sensual, and its moral attitude was one of arrogance — it sought to confirm its faith by victories not by miracles.)[74]

In the next generation, Hegel, combining with the Kantian distinction between reality and phenomena a vivid sense,

drawn from the new science, of the variety and multiplicity of things that exist, put forward

> a view of religious dogma as a more or less symbolic representation, in a concrete and historically conditioned form, of the timeless truths of idealist metaphysics.[75]

In the footsteps of Kant and Hegel came a new type of Christian writer and scholar, trying to use the new concepts of German philosophy to explain the structure of the Bible and the development of the Church. The starting point of this new critical movement was 'a new and more human conception of the mode of revelation;' the texts of the Old and New Testament were regarded as the work of human minds, to be studied and judged in the same way as other written texts; the task of the critic was

> to show how the ideas of any particular writer are related to the environment in which they grew, to the spirit of the age, to the life of the people, to the march of events, and to the kindred literary productions of other time, or, it may be, of other lands.[76]

Applied to the development of the Christian faith, such principles produced certain important results which were also to have an influence on thought about Islam. One such was the dissection of the Pentateuch into different strata; the reversal of the generally accepted order of the law and the prophets – the discovery by Duhm that

> the phenomenon of prophecy is independent of every Mosaic law but the moral law written in the heart... the great Prophets are not the children of the law, but the inspired creators of the religion of Israel. Prophecy is the supreme initial fact which transcends explanation.[77]

Another and perhaps even more delicate aspect of the process was the search for this historical figure of Jesus behind the hero of the gospel narratives. Since what was at stake was a person, not a book or the development of a state, and since all were agreed on regarding the person as the exemplar of human virtue, this activity, for all the care with which it was undertaken, could not but be directed by the individual thinker's view of what human nature was or should be; the result of the work was therefore to produce a

variety of different visions of Jesus. Such visions, at their best, could have the compelling and moving quality of the ethical seriousness of the age, but might become a 'literary picture' of which the criteria were no longer moral but aesthetic: Jesus wins converts by 'sa beauté pure et douce,' by '[le] charme infini de sa personne et de sa parole.'[78] In the process it might indeed happen that the human personality was 'dissolved' into something else: an element in a system of ideas. In Strauss's *Life of Jesus* the basic concept is no longer that of the revelation of God through Christ, it is that of *religion*, the essence of which is the perception by man that both God and men are spirit, and therefore are not distinct from one another: the infinite spirit is real only when it discloses itself in finite spirits, the finite only when it merges itself in the infinite. Men can perceive this truth either in the form of an idea or embodied in myths; the first is philosophy, the second is religion. But these myths are of human origin, they are produced by 'the spirit of a people or a community,' and therefore they vary from one religion to another. In the Christian religion, a man called Jesus, 'a Jewish claimant of the Messiahship,' served as the nucleus around which there gathered myths of various kinds — Old Testament myths transferred to him, myths produced by the Messianic expectation, others produced by the impression left by his own life and character. These myths must be interpreted *as* myths: that is to say as ways by which man returns through his imagination to union with God.[79] It was not so far from this position to that of Bruno Bauer who showed it to be impossible to prove that the historical personality had ever existed, and unnecessary as well: the only reality of which we could be certain was that of general ideas.[80]

Similar principles led to a further line of inquiry, into the development of the Christian community: an attempt to explain it in terms of normal historical categories, of one thing changing into another under the impact of human factors. Thus for Harnack the growth of Christianity involved a clear change of spirit and content. The gospel of Jesus was preached only to the Jews, the Gentile gospel was the invention of Paul, who 'wrecked the religion of Israel on the cross of Christ;'[81] Jesus founded no new sect or school, preached no new religion, taught nothing except

the destruction of the Temple and the judgement impending on the Jewish nation; it was Paul who brought the new and consciously different religion.[82]

It has seemed worth while to go into some detail about this new way of looking at Christianity, because it had a profound influence on ways of looking at Islam and other religions. The methods elaborated, and the conclusions to which they led, could be applied to other prophetic leaders, sacred books, and religious communities. In regard to each of the historic religions of mankind it would be possible to ask the same kind of question. How were the texts of its sacred books established? How far did they record a historical process, and how far themselves create a story? What was the human reality of the person of the founder, behind the 'myth' created by the sacred book or the accumulation of tradition? In what ways and under what human impulses did doctrines and institutions develop from the time of the founder? Behind all these there lay another question, which perhaps could not be answered but which had to be asked: what was there of divine, what of human, in this religion? How far did it throw light on the human ways in which religious beliefs and institutions develop, or on the way in which divine providence works?

For those who looked at religion from this point of view, there was perhaps none which offered a greater interest than Islam. Not only had it a sacred book, but one which had achieved its definitive form early in the development of the religion. It had a great mass of written tradition which, properly analysed, might help the religious scholar to understand how doctrines and institutions had grown up. Its religious leader claimed to be a prophet, and thus was well-placed to attract the attention of those who saw in prophecy the key to the development of religion; he had grown up (or so it seemed) in the light of history, and the study of his acts and words, as recorded in great detail, might help to explain how the historical person of the founder of a religion gradually turned into a mythical figure. The development of the thought and institutions of Islam had also been fully recorded in texts and was open to study. It had taken place not by the authority of rulers or of a church, but by the rational activity of concerned Muslims, tending towards the elaboration of an agreed opinion; it

was likely therefore to throw light on the way in which the religious consciousness works, and its interaction with political interests and social needs.

As C. H. Becker put it:

> A world-religion, such as Christianity, is a highly complex structure and the evolution of such a system of belief is best understood by examining a religion to which we have not been bound by a thousand ties from the earliest days of our lives... No less interesting are the discoveries to be attained by an inquiry into the development of Mohammedanism: here we can see the growth of tradition proceeding in the full light of historical criticism, a plain man gradually becoming miracle worker, mediator between God and man, saint, and the collection of his utterances expanding from year to year by the attribution to him of yet more acts and sayings.[83]

This indeed explains the origin and direction of much of the best Islamic scholarship of the later nineteenth century. For example, the seed of the Islamic researches of Julius Wellhausen can partly be found in his earlier work on the higher criticism of the Old Testament. In his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* he drew a distinction between three phases in the development of Judaism. The Mosaic phase was essentially that of the creation of a state, the soil out of which all the other institutions of Israel were later to arise: a state but not yet a theocracy — that was to come later 'as the residuum of a ruined State'.[84] The second phase was that of the prophets, whose role was to develop the doctrine and worship of Israel: inspired and awakened individuals, needing no support outside themselves, and so fitted to live in 'the storm of the world's history, which sweeps away human institutions.'[85] Their preaching was of old truths rather than new, and they did not expound or apply the law: that was the role of a third phase and another group of men, the priestly caste which grew up during the exile and continued even after the restoration of the Temple. Their creation was the Priestly Code: but at the same time they destroyed prophecy and the old freedom in the sphere of the religious spirit. They replaced the prophets with a book having authority, and the people of the Word became a 'people of the book.'[86]

The state, prophecy, and the law: these three elements are to be found in Islam too, although the relation between them is of course not quite the same. The state was founded after the prophet had preached, but before the content of prophecy was fully articulated; the law came later and here too perhaps it destroyed religious freedom. Thus a study of Islam could help to illuminate the general nature of religion; but it is typical of the age in which Wellhausen lived, of its belief in the metaphysical importance of the state and in the nation-state as its highest form, that his special attention should have been given to one of the three elements, the Arabian nation-state.[87]

Rather similar preoccupations underlay the Islamic studies of Ignaz Goldziher, even if the intellectual milieu from which he sprang was that of Jewish and not Christian liberalism. His own education was double, both traditional Jewish and modern Gentile: he studied the Talmud, but belonged to the second generation of Jews in central Europe who went to the *gymnasium*. His attitude to Islam was derived perhaps from both these sources. As a Jew of his generation he inherited a certain attitude towards other religions: an attitude in which indifference or hostility might be mixed with something else, the idea (formulated by Maimonides) of 'prophets of the nations' through whom God spoke to the non-Jewish world, communicating the essential truths to it not directly but from behind a veil. As a Jew also he lived the great controversy of his age, between orthodoxy and reform. The reformists did not necessarily deny the special status of the Jews or the validity of revelation, but interpreted them in a new way analogous to that of the liberal Christians. Here also the essential distinction was between divine and human elements. Doctrine was divine, and mediated through the prophets, but law (not only that of the Talmud but that contained in the Torah itself) was a product of historical development and therefore of human factors. Goldziher himself did not belong to the main stream of German-Jewish reformism.[88] Like many Hungarian Jews, he belonged to the group generally known as 'Neologen,' and for much of his life indeed was the secretary of their community in Budapest. The 'Neologen' as such had no consistent theological position, but some of them were in sympathy with reformism,

and it is clear that Goldziher accepted its main thesis, that of the distinction between divine and human elements in religious systems. He was strengthened in this way of looking at the matter by his secular studies in Germany, where he came into contact with the methods of critical history, as applied to the Near East by such scholars as Nöldeke and Sprenger, and with the science of mythology developed by Max Müller and others: the attempt, that is, to interpret myths as expressions of the collective spirit of an age or a people. His first book indeed was a contribution to this science: *Der Mythos bei der Hebraern und seine geschichtliche Entwicklung*.[89] It is the kind of book which mature men may regret having written in the heat of youth, and he later disowned it, but it remains significant of his way of thinking. At the heart of it lies a distinction between religion and myth. Pure religion is the sentiment of dependence, giving rise to the idea of Monotheism pure and unsullied by anything coarse and pagan. In its early phases it has not yet disentangled itself from myths, which are spontaneous acts of the human mind, not inventions of a particular thinker or a truthful record of what happened. As the religious consciousness develops however it severs its connection with myths, unites itself with the scientific consciousness, attains the idea of monotheism, and develops a theology. The main purpose of the book was to refute the racial theory of Renan and others that only the Aryans were capable of myth-making and therefore of art; in opposition to this, Goldziher tried to prove that all nations can create myths, Semites as well as Aryans, and that the Hebrew stories contained in the Bible can be given a valid mythical interpretation no less than others.

To one whose interest lay in disentangling the human from the divine element, and tracing the historical process by which pure monotheism disentangled itself from human creations, the relevance of Islam is obvious. At the origin of Islam there lies an assertion of pure monotheism, a complete break with the past; and this assertion gave rise to a whole process of development, the gradual formulation of a system of doctrine and law by the religious consciousness. This process formed the central theme of Goldziher's studies, and it was in conformity with his general view of religion that, when writing of the origin of Islam,

as in his essay on *Muruwwa*, he should lay emphasis on the 'tension' between Islam and the pagan environment in which it grew up;[90] and that, when studying the subsequent development of religious thought, as in his works on tradition, on the growth of dogma and law, and on the Zahirites, he should treat it as a process subject to historical laws, proceeding from within by the inner logic of the historical consciousnesss.[91]

Long beyond the time of Goldziher, indeed until the present, this general attitude towards religion, and towards Islam, has continued to be an important motive force in Islamic studies. It underlies such a statement as that with which H.A.R. Gibb prefaces his *Modern Trends in Islam*:

> ... I make bold to say that the metaphors in which Christian doctrine is traditionally enshrined satisfy me intellectually as expressing symbolically the highest range of spiritual truth which I can conceive, provided that they are interpreted not in terms of anthropomorphic dogma but as general concepts, related to our changing views of the nature of the universe. I see the church and the congregation of Christian people as each dependent on the other for continued vitality, the church serving as the accumulated history and instrument of the Christian conscience, the permanent element which is constantly renewed by the stream of Christian experience and which gives both direction and effective power to that experience.
>
> My view of Islam will necessarily be the counterpart of this. The Muslim church and its members constitute a similar composite, each forming and reacting to the other so long as Islam remains a living organism and its doctrines satisfy the religious consciousness of its adherents. While giving full weight to the historical structure of Muslim thought and experience, I see it also as an evolving organism, recasting from time to time the content of its symbolism, even though the recasting is concealed (as it is to a considerable extent in Christianity) by the rigidity of its outward formulas.[92]

In this careful statement, a balance is kept between what distinguishes religious traditions and what they have in common: all grow up in conformity to the laws of human nature and society, but what they produce is different in

nature and may differ in value — 'the metaphors in which Christian doctrine is traditionally enshrined' are seen as 'expressing symbolically the highest range of spiritual truth.' But it would also be possible to develop this line of thought in another direction: towards a final equivalence of religious systems, each containing something of value, each a more or less inadequate expression of what cannot be fully expressed, all to be regarded with respect and without judgement, for — whether or not they differ in value in the eyes of God — they cannot be judged objectively by men each of them bound by his own tradition.

Such a concept of religion has been worked out by Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Once more he starts with a distinction, between 'inner faith' and 'outward system.'[93] Faith is 'a well-nigh universal human phenomenon,'[94] but outward systems change, and not only forms of worship but doctrines as well. They change because they are human, the expression of different cultures, 'the religious forms of a people;'[95] and for the same reason they will continue, for mankind is inescapably divided into different cultural groups each with its own religious tradition enshrining certain values. What are the values and distinguishing marks of the Islamic religious community? They are to be found in the special ways in which Muslims talk of God, or rather of His actions in the world: He reveals not Himself but something about Himself, and does so through a book, not a person, and a book revealed to a human prophet; the content of that book is first of all a command, to worship God alone, and therefore also a rejection, of polytheism, of human tyranny, of 'the false Gods of the heart.'[96] These should be regarded rather as the values of a community than of a religion, for the concept of 'religion' or of 'religions' is a false reification, itself the product of the modern phase of the Judaeo-Christian tradition of thought. It falsely confounds two underlying realities: on the one hand, the vitality of personal faith; on the other, the cumulative tradition of the different human cultures in which men have embodied their faith through history.[97]

IV

In such writings we can see implicit a view of Islam which, while remaining within the bounds of Christianity (or, with Goldziher, of Judaism) had come to concede to Islam an existence in its own right, if not as a separate mode of divine revelation, at least as a separate type of human response to the divine call, and one which expressed itself in all aspects of life and contained certain values of its own. But there was another line of thought which looked on all religious systems and all civilizations as products of the human spirit. The very extension of knowledge and change of view which led to that 'new and more human conception of the mode of revelation' could lead also to a denial of the distinction between what was known through revelation and what was known by reason: in the last analysis, religions like other human phenomena could be seen as products of mind, whether by that was meant the individual human mind or something universal and absolute.

This was a conclusion implicit in one of the seminal ideas of the nineteenth century, that of Process or Development: the idea that all which exists is part of a continuous, self-creating, self-maintaining process, changing in accordance with principles contained within itself, through the operation of some 'force' which works upon matter to produce ever more complex forms; and that the goal of the process is not something beyond it, but its own last and highest stage. Seen in this light, every stage of the process has a unique importance, each has contributed something, and if we are to understand the whole we must distinguish what that something is. When applied to human history, this conception gave importance to the idea of a 'period' or 'civilization' in which all events and institutions had a unity, since all were expressions of one 'force,' whether it were defined in terms of religious belief, or 'spirit,' or race or class. History as such assumed a new importance: it was the working out of the nature and destiny of the universe, and the study of history was the attempt to define the laws by which that working out took place, and to give a rational explanation of why everything happened how and when it did, and what it contributed to the process.

Thus the Islamic phase of civilization like all others took

on a new meaning, and it became necessary to ask new questions about it, or at least to ask old questions in a new way. Islam was seen not only as a religion but also as a civilization in which religious belief was only one (and perhaps not the basic) element; and the problem to resolve was not whether the beliefs of Islam were true or false but what was the nature of this civilization, what distinguished it from others. What was the underlying 'force' which had given it this nature — was it the religion of Islam or something else? Again, what was the relationship between it and what came before and after, what did it take from the one and transmit to the other? In the light of this, what was its role in the whole process, what did it contribute which no other civilization did?

For the first great thinker of this line, the role of Islam was secondary but not without importance. The thought of Hegel was open, as we have seen, to a 'religious' interpretation, but also to an immanentist or humanist one. For him, Reason was both the matter and the active formal principle of the historical process. History was the progressive self-realisation of Reason, it was Reason making itself actually what it was potentially, an embodiment of its own idea, and this idea was Freedom: Reason is fully itself when free and conscious of being so, and when embodied in a free society and state in which the private and general wills are in harmony. In this process there have been four main stages: the oriental world, where law existed, but as an external force of compulsion; the Greek world, where Spirit became conscious of itself; the Roman world, where Spirit realised its freedom but only in the realm of individual faith, while society and state remained the domain of tyranny; and finally the German world in which freedom is embodied in the state. The role of Islam had been to help this fourth world into existence. The barbarian peoples who occupied the Roman world were free, as the Romans had not been free, but they were free only to follow their particular aims: there was no common aim, no single principle or law to order particular wills, and therefore their public life had been the domain of 'chance and entanglement.' Islam had come as the antithesis to correct this particularity: it was essentially the worship of the One, the absolute object of attraction and devotion. But this excess

of devotion had also its defect: for Islam all men were as nothing compared with the One, the only object of secular existence was to be subject to the One. Islam therefore lacked the special relationship which, in Judaism, existed between the One and at least some human beings, and which in Christianity had led the human spirit back from the One to the human world, in a self-conscious return on itself. On the contrary, Islam had no interest in the human world except in so far as it presented the pure adoration of the One, and recognized no purely natural bond between human beings, only that of common belief and worship. Because the object of its worship was abstract Oneness, it tended to enthusiasm and fanaticism, and since the enthusiasm was abstract it was also destructive (although it could also be magnanimous and heroic). When the enthusiasm died, worldly interests crept in — the love of power and glory —; but because of their final belief in the One Muslims could never give their real allegiance to these worldly things, and sooner or later the enthusiasm would revive. It was this alternation of mood which made Islamic civilization ephemeral: it flowered quickly but disolved no less so, for 'on the basis presented by Universality nothing is firm.' Later indeed there was a certain restoration under the Ottomans, but it came too late: the Spirit had moved from Islam to modern Europe, whose historical mission it was to absorb the antithesis into a synthesis, and nothing was left in the Muslim world except sensual enjoyment and oriental repose.[98]

In some sense most of the historians and historical thinkers of the nineteenth century were children of Hegel. But the general concepts which he represented could be developed in many different ways, with differing emphases. If history was a process, divided into different phases, it was possible, when looking at each phase, to lay the main emphasis on two points: on its positive value, its contribution as an indispensable step from somewhere to somewhere else, or its defects, as something of less value than that which replaced it. Both these views were reflected in the thought of those who gave serious consideration to Islam.

Among those who, on the whole, took the first path, Auguste Comte regarded Islam like Christianity as a necessary phase in the education of mankind. Both indeed

belonged, in his view, to the same phase, the 'mediaeval' with its two principles of monotheism and feudalism. But they differed in various ways: Christianity separated while Islam united the two powers; Christianity was a religion of the governed and taught the discipline of obedience, while Islam was a religion of the rulers and taught the discipline of command. In some ways, Islam was the more conducive of the two to human progress: it had neither a theocracy nor complicated doctrines, and thus it was easier for a man to free himself from it; it gave its subject-peoples, for example the Greeks, a social discipline which they lacked. But in the last analysis neither Islam nor its ancient enemy, Catholic Christianity, could become a universal religion: their long conflict ended in stalemate and common exhaustion, which in turn made possible the coming of the final age of scientific thought, industrial activity and positive religion.[99]

But even if the historical role of Islam was over, something remained behind. The Turks still had the qualities of a ruling people, and would have a special part to play in spreading the ideas of positivism in the East. (Comte followed with great interest the progress of the Ottoman reforms. He included in the preface to the third volume of his *Système de Politique Positive* a letter to the former Grand Vizar Reshid Pasha, praising his reforming measures, drawing the attention of Muslims to the positive religion 'comme leur offrant spontanément le dénouement inespéré de leurs principales sollicitudes,' and hoping that the East could go directly from Islam to positivism without passing through the stage of metaphysics, that period of 'l'anarchique agitation... où les philosophes sont forcés de s'adresser aux inférieurs faute de pouvoir être compris des supérieurs'.[100] Later, at the turn of the century, a closer connection was established: the leader of the Young Turk exiles in Paris, Ahmad Riza Bey, was himself a positivist and a member of the Comtean circle in France, and when the news of the Young Turk revolution in 1908 came, he and they regarded it as a triumph for the positive philosophy). In contrast to the Turks, the Persians would be the last people to become positivists: they had no social discipline, and their religion had become a barrier against progress.[101]

Something else remained: the memory of what Islam had done. In the Comtean religion of humanity, human history

would take the place of the Incarnate God and the past would be enshrined forever in the mind of the believer. In the liturgical year of the Church of Humanity, one week would be set apart for the commemoration of Islamic monotheism, the only possible precursor of positivism in the east. In this week, Thursday would be the feast of Muhammad, Sunday the commemoration of Islam in itself, and Monday the feast of the battle of Lepanto, the last great expression of the military instinct, the end of the military era and the beginning of the industrial.[102]

It may be doubted whether the feast of Lepanto was ever observed with great reverence, even by the most fervent believers; but what we may call in general a 'positivist' way of looking at Islam, as a stage in a purely human process of development, was widespread and was indeed one of the attitudes which inspired the oriental scholarship of the nineteenth century. It began with a number of scholars who, in the middle of the century, tried to give a purely human explanation of the rise and development of Islamic civilization, in terms of historical factors: among them Von Kremer and Sprenger.[103] Later, L. Caetani developed this idea in a more definitely positivist direction, laying stress on psychological rather than religious factors. The rise of Islam for him was not just a sudden upsurge of bands filled with religious zeal, but a phase in the fundamental process which had moulded world-history, the interaction of Asia and Europe. The spirit of Asia is essentially religious, with no idea of race or nation; the European spirit makes a distinction between the secular and religious spheres, hence its great products, Roman law and rational thought. At the time when Islam arose, the Semitic peoples of the Near East were subject to the supremacy of the Aryan race, bringing with it the political institutions of Rome and the Hellenized Christianity of Byzantium. But the Oriental spirit could not permanently accept this moral domination of Europe: even Christianity, although eastern by origin, had been fused with the western soul and so become European. Hence a violent 'nationalist' reaction by the Near Eastern peoples, giving rise to a spiritual and moral vacuum which was filled first by Christian heresies and then by Islam. Islam was thus a 'symbol' of the revolt of the east: in becoming this, it ceased to be Arab and became a uni-

versal religion dominated by the conquered peoples, Syrians, Copts and others; it was they who created Islam as we know it, while the Arabs remained pagan at heart.[104]

For Caetani then Islam was an expression of revolt against European culture. But to say this was to pose a further problem. If Islam was the product of purely human forces, it could not be regarded as self-generated and self-explanatory, but as a product of factors anterior to itself. Seen in this light, the essential historical problem of Islam became that of its relationship with the Greek civilization which it replaced; and once the problem was posed, it could not be answered in terms of stark opposition, but rather of interpenetration, of the survival of the Greek spirit in an Islamic form.

Such a line of thought was worked out in some detail by C. H. Becker. For him there was a sharp distinction between the religion of Islam and the civilization usually called Islamic. There was, to begin with, a religious impulse, arising from some 'psychological' tendencies in Muhammad himself but influenced by Judaism and Christianity. But this new religion was not by itself the cause of the formation of the State: the fundamental reason for that was economic — the hunger of the Arab tribesmen, directed for Arab political purposes, and using religion as its 'party cry.' The conversion of conquered peoples to Islam also must be explained in mainly political and economic terms, by the desire to join the ruling group and escape from taxation. Once the Arab state and the Islamic community had been formed, there arose a culture which was in essence neither Arab nor Islamic. 'Without Alexander the Great no Islamic civilization:'[105] its culture and institutions were a continuation of that which had existed before. 'The Arabs simply continued to develop the civilization of post-classical antiquity with which they had come in contact,'[106] and the process was largely carried out by Jewish and Christian converts who brought into Islam their own habits of thought. Hence the underlying similarity of Christian and Muslim culture, but with one great exception: the European idea of Man was very different from the Islamic, and from this many other differences were to flow — there was nothing in Islam similar to the western concept of the free citizen.[107]

In a more reserved and guarded way Levi della Vida has

put forward a similar view. Islamic culture might well be a product of Hellenism, but this is not to deny its originality. Its roots lay in Judaism and Christianity (with a contribution from other oriental faiths), but it was saved from being a mere 'counterfeit Christianity' by the survival of certain characteristics of the culture of pre-Islamic Arabia, transmitted by the Qur'an and the literary tradition. Nevertheless, the value of this should not be placed too high: they are characteristics of a barbarian age, and responsible not only for what is original in Islam, but also for a certain 'crudity' in it.[108]

Thinkers of this type might look harshly on Islam, might deny that it was original, but at least they gave it the credit for having contributed something of value by transmitting the culture of antiquity to the modern world. But when the emphasis shifted, from the relations of Islam with what went before to its relations with what came after, the judgement tended to be harsher, and indeed to be a secular form of that judgement upon Islam as opposed to Christianity which was the common attitude of earlier generations. In the work of Renan, for example, that opposition takes the secular form of a contrast between the 'Semitic' and 'Aryan' races. He does not, it is true, deny what Islam has contributed to human civilization, but he believes that the contribution is over and done with.

For Renan, the motive force of history is the spirit of the race, and the fundamental division is not between religious communities but between races. Christianity and Islam are the products of two different races each with its own mentality. Islam was the characteristic product of the Semitic mentality. It was a religion which prevented the use of reason and the growth of science: all religions, it is true, do this when allowed to go beyond their real purpose of inspiring the human heart with high ideals, and are allowed to dominate human thought and action, but Islam did so in a particular way. Its society was based on 'l'idée la plus opposée au progrès: l'État fondé sur une prétendue révélation, le dogme gouvernant la société.'[109] There had never been, there could not be, such a thing as a Muslim scientist: science had indeed existed and been tolerated inside Islamic society, but the scientists and philosophers were not really Muslims. The great age of Islamic thought

had been the Abbasid, but the Abbasid Caliphs themselves were scarcely believers, the culture of their court and empire was a revived Sassanian culture, produced by men who were not deeply Muslim and were in inner revolt against the religion they were forced to profess. 'Arabic' philosophy and science were Arabic only in language, in spirit they were 'Greco-Sassanian.'[110] (The racial theory is so old-fashioned now that it is difficult to understand the force of its impact. But Renan was by no means alone in thinking in this way. Gobineau in his book on the inequality of human races put forward a similar thesis. Islam was created by the Arab race because it could not be absorbed into the civilizations already existing. In the same way, other races were never really absorbed into Islam: they remained true to themselves and in the end reasserted their own culture. The so-called 'Islamic' civilization therefore did not exist: it was a mixture of the civilizations of different races — its religion Arab, its laws Persian and Roman, its sciences Greco-Syrian and Egyptian.[111])

Both the Greeks and Persians, Renan maintains were Aryans not Semites, and this was not an accident. Science and Philosophy were products of the Aryan mind, moulded by 'la recherche réfléchie, indépendante, sévère, courageuse, philosophique, en un mot, de la vérité;' while the Semites had 'ces intuitions fermes et sûres qui... atteignirent la forme religieuse la plus épurée que l'antiquité ait connue.'[112] And just as the Aryans, not the Semites, had produced science, so they had produced Myth, fertile mother of the arts. The Semitic spirit was clear but not fecund; its contribution to the world could be summed up in one word, Monotheism. 'Le desert est monothéiste:'[113] its religion is simple, patriarchal, without mysticism or theology (except such as it has borrowed from outside), without mythology, without a sense of the creative richness of life, hence also without epic or the plastic arts, and without political civilization — 'l'anarchie la plus complete, tel a toujours été l'état politique de la race arabe.'[114] Once monotheism was established the Semites had made their great contribution to human culture and handed on the torch to the Aryans. Sprung from the same stock, the two 'grandes races nobles' had complemented each other for a time. The essential task of the Semites had been 'de bannir le

polythéisme et les énormes complications dans lesquelles se perdait la pensée religieuse des Ariens.' But

> une fois cette mission accomplie, la race sémitique déchoit rapidement, et laisse la race arienne marcher seule à la tête des destinées du genre humain.[115]

This thesis had an immense impact when it was first put forward. As we have seen, the desire to refute it inspired Goldziher's first book, and the same motive led the famous Muslim publicist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to write a reasoned reply — a reply of which Renan acknowledged the strong points, while ascribing them to the fact that Jamal al-Din, being an Afghan (or more likely a Persian), was himself an Aryan.[116]

Jacob Burckhardt went further than Renan. He could not even find that Islam deserved credit for what it had done. Its civilization was not only less advanced than that of modern Europe, it was also a retrogression from what had gone before. Its triumph could be explained by two factors: first, the Arabs, 'a brilliant people, capable of self-denial, with boundless self-reliance of individuals and tribes... summoned to a new faith and to world-hegemony in the name of this faith;'[117] and secondly the nature of that faith itself. Muhammad was a radical simplifier, hostile to 'all idolatry,... all the multifarious ramifications of the hitherto existing faith,'[118] and this was both his strength and his weakness. Islam succeeded because it was 'a triumph of triviality, and the great majority of mankind *is* trivial;' but for the same reason, once it had succeeded it destroyed over wide areas two more profound religions, Christianity and dualism.[119] It had the peculiar power of abolishing in the minds of those who accepted it their previous history, of giving them an arrogance in the light of which they grew ashamed of what they had been.[120] In place of the richness of their past it installed dryness and unity. It knew only one kind of state, despotism: all Islamic states were 'mere replicas of the world-empire on a small scale,' and the only change was the alternation between rulers who lived for a cause and the ordinary despots who succeeded them.[121] Similarly, it had only two ideals of life, the ruler and the *darwish*; no patriotic feeling, only religious pride; no epic, drama or comedy, and a literature which exalted grammar

and speech over content. Its faith lacked inwardness, and such genuine devotion and mysticism as it had came from outside.

V

To place civilizations or societies on a temporal line, passing from the lower to the higher, as these theories do, is not the only way of thinking about them. The impact of the natural sciences on all modern thinking has been so strong that many attempts have been made since Montesquieu to work out a science of societies analogous to the natural sciences in its purpose and methods. Its purpose would be, not to judge but to classify and to formulate general laws covering classes of wider or more limited extension; and its method to abstract from the individual members of the classes some general nature which they share. Seen in this light, what would be most interesting about Islam would be not what distinguished it from all other societies but what it had in common either with a limited group of other societies or with all societies as such; but of course many different views might be held about what the common characteristic was.

In the nineteenth century many such classifications of society were attempted, and Islam was relevant to some of them. Marx and Engels, for example, in an exchange of letters shortly before the outbreak of the Crimean War, when the future of the Ottoman Empire was being much discussed, tried to explain the rise of Islam within the framework of a materialistic theory of history, and did so by dividing Asiatic from other societies. Using an idea of which the origin can be found in the writings of Adam Smith and the Mills,[122] the two correspondents make a broad distinction between oriental and western history and treat the rise of Islam as a phenomenon typical of the first. The basic fact which provides the key to all oriental history, Engels suggests, is that there is no private property in land. Climate and the condition of the soil in the vast desert regions stretching from the Sahara to East Asia make agriculture impossible except by means of artificial irrigation-works, and these can only be created and maintained by the government. In other words, agriculture depends on political

factors: a single war can ruin a whole civilization. In Arabia and the surrounding countries there took place during the seventh century a weakening of governments, because of the displacement of trade-routes from Arabia northwards to Iraq and Persia; when government weakened, settled society also grew weak, and it was easy for the nomads to move in and dominate it.

This coming in of the nomads was only one of numerous such invasions throughout history, which had led to the rapid creation of empires and new cities. (The Jewish occupation of Palestine had been another such, for the Jews were nothing but a Beduin tribe differentiated by local circumstances from others). It was a process which in itself needed no complex explanation, and the only problem it raised was that of 'the religious swindle': of why in the Orient social and economic phenomena took a religious form — why the history of the East *appears* to be one of religions. No clear answer emerges from the letters, but the problem itself is defined in clear and vigorous terms: the nomadic reaction against a weak and decadent settled life expressed itself in a pretended new religion which was in fact a reassertion of an older 'national' religious tradition in its pure form against an amalgam of that tradition with a decadent Judaism and Christianity. (Here too the rise of Islam was only one manifestation of a recurrent theme in Near Eastern history: the pretended Holy Book of the Jews had also in its time been no more than a transcription in a modified form of the old religious tradition of the Arab tribes.)[123]

Carlyle too can be regarded as one who made an early and rather crude attempt to classify historical events. In a famous lecture he depicts Muhammad as an example of a type of mind which has appeared again and again in human history, the 'prophetic' type. The prophet is a certain kind of human hero who carries certain human qualities to the limit: 'a silent great soul... one of those who cannot *but* be in earnest;' austere, intuitive, looking 'through the show of things into *things*,' convinced and propagating Islam through conviction not through the sword, and above all sincere. Whether he was in fact inspired by God is not to be known: perhaps Carlyle himself has doubts of it, for he describes the Qur'an as 'a wearisome, confused jumble,

crude, incondite... Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran.' But he finds something inspired in the very sincerity of Mohammad:

> The great Mystery of Existence... glowed in upon him, with its terrors, with its splendours; no hearsay could hide that unspeakable fact, 'Here am I.' Such sincerity... has in very truth something of divine... the great Heaven rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars, answered not... The man's own soul, and what of God's inspiration dwelt there, had to answer ! ... Such light had come, as it could, to illuminate the darkness of this wild Arab soul. A confused dazzling splendour, as of life and Heaven, in the great darkness which threatened to be death: he called it revelation and the angel Gabriel; — who of us can yet know what to call it... Providence had unspeakably honoured *him* by revealing it... he therefore was bound to make known the same to all creatures: this is what was meant by 'Mahomet is the Prophet of God.'[124]

Yet one more early attempt at a scientific theory of all civilizations is to be found in the writings of Gustave Le Bon, which had a certain fame at the end of the nineteenth century. His general theory of history was a simple one: that there are certain principles of development which have manifested themselves again and again, and will continue to do so. Racial character is the permanent factor in history, moulding institutions, languages, and doctrines in its own image: it can change, but only slowly and because of a change in sentiments and beliefs, and not at will but in accordance with the nature of the race. Among these 'races,' Le Bon had a special interest in the Arabs, and spent much ingenuity in fitting them into the framework of his theory. In his view, Islam did not create the institutions or even the moral code of the Arabs: they already existed, and Muhammad could do no more than choose among them and give to those he chose the sanction of a religion. This he did as a political device, to achieve political unity, but he did it at a price:

> C'est l'homme sans doute qui a créé les dieux, mais après les avoir créés il a été promptement asservi par eux.[125]

Islam has slowly changed the racial character of the

Arabs, and exercised on them a permanent hypnotic effect:

> Du fond de son tombeau, l'ombre du prophète règne en souveraine sur ces millions de croyants.[126]

But the constitution of other races has not been so much affected: on the contrary, each has remoulded Islam in its own image — for example, the Islam of India has become polytheist like all Indian religions.

Thus there is no Islamic civilization, there is an Arab civilization, formed by a combination of the moral and intellectual qualities of the Arab race with the unifying ideal given them by Islam. It is this combination which accounts for its great qualities but also for its defects: the pugnacity of the Arabs was good when there was a world to conquer, but later turned in on themselves and led to internal conflict; the domination of law caused stagnation of mind; autocratic rule again was good for the conquest of an empire, bad because everything depended on the character of the autocrat. Being what they were, the Arabs could never have developed further than they did; they cannot develop further now, and their attempt to Europeanize themselves is doomed to failure because it would involve changing their character.[127]

More elaborate formulations of such naturalistic theories were to come later, in the twentieth century, and to come indeed at a time when philosophers of science were giving a more subtle explanation of scientific method and the nature and status of scientific laws. Belated products of the scientific spirit of an earlier age, the systems of Spengler and Toynbee, doubtful if not desperate as they are about the prospects of western civilization, are alike in their confidence about the power of human reason to formulate general laws. But their model is that of biology rather than physics, as it would have been a half-century earlier, and for both of them what is important is to discover the 'natural history,' the life-cycle followed by all examples of the species called 'cultures' or 'civilizations.'

For Spengler, human history is the record of a number of different cultures each of which can be conceived of as a living being: individual, essentially different from the others, but subject to a similar life-cycle. The essence of a culture is its 'soul,' creative of a fundamental symbol or concept of

space, through which it views the world and which is finally incomprehensible to those who do not belong to the culture; but all, however they differ and exclude each other, go through the same phases in the same period of roughly a thousand years. These phases are four: spring, summer, autumn, and winter, distinguished primarily by different attitudes towards the great 'myth' and its corollary, the new 'God-feeling' from which the culture springs, but secondarily by different forms of art and civilisation. Of these various cultures, one of those which most concern him is the Arabian or Magian, of which the fundamental concept is that of the dualism of two mysterious substances, Spirit and Soul, and of the world as a cavern.[128] But this 'Arabian' culture was not created by those whom we usually call Arabs, nor by Islam. The Arabs are themselves a product of it, and Islam is only a phase of something which had begun earlier. The 'Arabian' culture began around the first century A.D. in the area bounded by Nile, Tigris, Black Sea and South Arabian coast. The myth with which it began was first expressed in the great religious movements of the time, Jewish, Christian, Manichaean and Persian.[129] From that time for roughly a thousand years its history is continuous, and Islam makes no break in it. Its political institutions are unchanged: Diocletian was 'the first of the Caliphs.'[130] Its art too continues on a single line: one style is exemplified in Persian fire-temples, Roman basilicas, Christian churches and mosques, and just as Diocletian was the first Caliph, the Pantheon as rebuilt by Hadrian was the first mosque.[131] Even its religious ideas remain basically unaltered: Islam is not a new religion, it is the second or 'summer' stage of an older religious tradition, the stage of a puritanism which, like Protestantism in Europe, liberates the forces of popular opposition to the first official formulation of the religious myth. It differs from the similar phase in other cultures by its violence, and of that there are two explanations: the Arabian culture had grown up inside the classical, and it was a slow and arduous task for the Magian soul to liberate itself from the domination of classical thought. It is moreover a culture in which religion has the primacy — its law is an emanation of God, its authority is the consensus of the elect, its community is created by faith, and its inner movements therefore express themselves in violent assertions and denials.[132]

In Spengler's thought some balance is kept between the incommunicable individuality of a culture and the universal nature of its experience in time. In that of Toynbee the main emphasis is clearly on the second: on the life-cycle of birth, growth, breakdown, of a disintegration which can be checked by the rise of universal churches and empires but then sets in again (unless men take heed in time), and of a new civilization arising from the ashes of the old. Particular civilizations are only important to him as proving the general truth of the general law, or as possessing characteristics which are not allowed for in the theory and which therefore compel a change in it. For Toynbee as for Spengler, what at first sight appears to be the Islamic civilization is a favourite object of contemplation: indeed, it is clear that, in very different ways, the two systems have been built on the basis of a deep knowledge of the Near East and its religious cultures. Again, for Toynbee as for Spengler the history of Islam takes on a new form when seen in the light of the theory. The rise of Islam did not mark the beginning of a new civilization; like other universal religions, it came to birth at a late stage in the life-history of a civilization which already existed, had already broken down, was in full disintegration, and from which a new civilization would arise later. This previously existing civilization was the 'Syriac,' created by the stimulus of the Eurasian nomads on the north-eastern frontier of the Middle East; by the tenth century B.C. it had passed its height and had its breakdown, but its disintegration was then violently arrested by the intrusion of Hellenism.[133] Held, so to speak, in suspended animation within the body of the Hellenic civilization, when Hellenism decayed it had come to life again at that point of disintegration which it had already reached; and it was at this point that Islam emerged as the universal religion which appears when civilizations decay. Islam therefore did not mark a new birth but a revival of the Syriac civilization: its religion expressed the alienation of the submerged Syriac proletariat, its Caliphate was the universal state of a declining society; it could not stop the decline, it could only arrest it for a time, until it set in once more with the coming of an external proletariat – Turks and Mongols in Asia, Berbers and Beduin in North Africa.[131]

It was only after the death of the revived Syriac civili-

zation, according to Toynbee, that there emerged between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D. a specifically Islamic civilization: at first indeed it would be more correct to speak of two sister-civilizations, the Arabic and Iranic, which only merged into one when the first was incorporated into an Iranic state, the Ottoman Empire. But even then the union was incomplete and forced: the Ottoman Iranic civilization never flowered, it was flawed at an early stage by the split between Sunnis and Shiʿis, and the Ottoman Empire, instead of being a universal state of the whole Iranic world, became an artificial union of half that world with an Arab world forcibly absorbed into it. The Arabs and their rulers never fertilized each other's culture, and the forced union broke down when the Arabs revolted against Ottoman rule and when both of them underwent a process similar to that of Hellenization – their violent incorporation into the modern Western civilization.[135]

Such systems now have a curiously old-fashioned air. Few thinkers nowadays would be so confident that human phenomena can be treated in the same ways as the objects which the natural scientist studies; and even while the ideas of Toynbee and Spengler were being formed other thinkers, and above all Max Weber, were trying to discover some specific and adequate way of thinking about human societies. It is true, in Weber's thought also we find echoes of the past: as Gerth and Mills have pointed out

> Weber's conception of the charismatic leader is a continuation of a 'philosophy of history' which, after Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, influenced a great deal of nineteenth century history writing.[136]

Again, like earlier thinkers Weber tried to see all societies as being what Toynbee would call 'philosophically contemporaneous,' that is to say, abstracted from the temporal relationship of before and after and laid out on a line to be thought about simultaneously. But in at least two important ways Weber differs from those who went before him: first, in his recognition that each society is unique and that the problem of the sociologist is that of reconciling the 'historicist' approach with the 'positivist,' of accepting the uniqueness of each historical event but at the same time making valid general statements about it; secondly, in rejecting

any attempt to explain what happens or what exists in terms of a single factor — whether it be 'spirit' or race or class or great men — and insisting that the concrete reality of a particular society can be seen in the light of many different concepts. Societies are unique, but exemplify certain recurrent types, themselves ultimately to be explained in terms of the nature of man. These types are numerous, and subtly described and distinguished from each other; and Weber's view of history allows not only for the influence of the charismatic leader but for the processes which continue once the charisma grows weaker. Moreover, the relationship of types to individuals in the social world is not the same as that of classes and individuals in the natural world. The types are 'ideal types,' concepts (whether of a 'state' or of a process) abstracted from reality, given an inner logical consistency, and arranged in 'typologies' or scales of alternative types. They can be used to illuminate a concrete reality, but no more than that: for an existent being or historical process never wholly exemplifies an abstract type, seen in different lights it exemplifies many types to some extent, but is always more than the sum of them.

Thus, in the section on the sociology of religion in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Islam like other religious systems is formally conceded its unique and separate existence, but an attempt is made to understand it by holding it in the light of several typologies. It is seen, first of all, as corresponding closely to the pure type of a prophetic 'book-religion,' and one in which the sacred law is of particular importance.[137] As a prophetic religion, it is 'naturally compatible' with the class-feeling of the nobility: the religious wars which it preached were directed towards the acquisition of large estates.[138] But Weber thinks of it as differing from other prophetic religions, Judaism and Christianity, in the relationship between its ethical system and secular life. Its ethic is 'feudal,' oriented — even in its mystical form — towards 'world conquest' and not towards 'world renunciation' as in Christianity.[139] Because of this, its institutions show such marks as the following:

> the obviously unquestioned acceptance of slavery, serfdom, and polygamy; the disesteem for and subjection of

women; the essentially ritualistic character of religious obligations; and finally, the great simplicity of religious requirements and the even greater simplicity of the modest ethical requirements.[140]

Again, its intellectual life was more restricted than that of Christianity. The development of metaphysics and ethics was in the hands of the 'priesthood' and 'tendencies towards rationalism were completely lacking in the popular dervish faith.'[141] Both because of its 'feudal' character and its 'anti-rationalism' Islam never possessed the characteristics which help to explain the development of modern Europe (and particularly Protestant) society: a kind of vocational asceticism, the rational control of everyday life, and behind it a moral tension — the tension between an ethics of salvation and an ethics of worldly success, held in uneasy balance by the conception that success is a sign of salvation.[142]

It is enough to state such views for the Islamic scholar to have doubts. That Islam is seen as virtually a pure type of warrior religion runs counter not only to what is now known and thought about it, but also to Weber's own sense of the complexity of the particular existent being. His Islam is too simple to be true, and this is clearly so because he does not know much about it; his views seem to have been largely derived from Wellhausen's *Arab Kingdom*. Islam indeed was the only great religion of which a special and detailed study is not to be found in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. His remarks about Islam are therefore less informed than about other religions; and — what is more important — his typology was never modified to take account of the specific features of Islam.

Nevertheless Max Weber, more perhaps than anyone else, has formulated the problem of how to think about society; his tension between 'historicism' and 'positivism' is still there — everything in history is unique and unrepeatable, but we *must* think about it, and thinking involves general concepts. Where Weber fell short, as other thinkers of secular type had done, was in regarding Islamic society as one among many, and one which in itself offered no important theoretical problem. To some extent this defect may have been accidental: had he lived longer he would no

doubt have added a careful study of the sociology of Islam to those he wrote on other religions. But behind such an accident there may lie something else: that peculiar difficulty which thinkers in western Christendom have always had in finding a category in terms of which Islam can be understood, being neither 'east' nor 'west,' neither Christian nor unequivocally non-Christian and, wherever one places it, being linked with Europe by a long and intimate, an ambiguous and usually a painful relationship. (Jacques Berque has gone further, and suggested that we can see here an example of the 'instrumental' view of other societies which is typical of the modern West: 'le pendant spirituel du commerce d'échelles, ou de l'expansion politique').[143]

Since Weber wrote there has been a certain change. We can never quite neglect the political motivation of our studies, and no doubt the emergence of a unified world of independent states on the way to modernity has thrown a stronger light on the different paths by which they enter the modern world. But behind this we can discern, as in the nineteenth century, certain general movements of the mind. The great advances in detailed understanding of Islam in the last century were made, as we have seen, by men who came to Islam with certain concepts taken from the new science of religious origins and development; in the present age, few scholars have been untouched by the development of sociology, social anthropology, and social and economic history. Their influence is to be seen in the work of Jacques Berque,[144] so sensitive to the originality of Islamic culture, of Von Grunebaum,[145] with his concern for the way in which the Islamic faith served as a 'point of crystallization' for a new socio-political unity, and what had begun as a religion became a civilization, and of Gibb,[146] with its classical conception of medieval Islamic society as formed by a continual and unending permeation of matter by form — on the one side, peoples of diverse stocks and traditions drawn into the *umma*, and on the other the unifying force of the social teaching of Islam. From such writings two guiding principles emerge. First, 'Islamic society' is different from others, and only to be understood in its own terms; secondly, it is not a single existing society but an 'ideal type,' a group of related characteristics which have embodied themselves in different ways and to different extents in many

existing societies. The religion of Islam, its law, and its principles of political and social organization, injected into different communities, have created a whole class of societies, by no means identical with each other, but all differing specifically from non-Islamic societies in ways only to be understood through a typology formulated for this purpose.

But all this remains an aspiration yet to be fulfilled, and it is only rarely that the detailed work of Islamic scholarship has been fertilized by sociological thought. Watt's *Islam and the Integration of Society*,[147], for all its insight, is perhaps too much affected by an older type of 'generalizing' sociology: the rise of Islam is seen as an example of a process which may occur, in some form, wherever certain conditions exist. A new book, Rodinson's *Islam et capitalisme*,[148] springs from a more conscious and mature reflection about sociological method. Accepting in general a Marxist view of the relations between the economic organization of a society and its prevalent ideas, he nevertheless insists that this does not imply a rigid view of the historical process, a belief that all societies must move through the same sequence of phases; the societies in which Islam has been dominant may in some respects have followed a path peculiar to themselves. But here too it is necessary to make a distinction. Islamic societies have not been formed by Islam alone: it is wrong to suppose

> que les hommes d'une époque et d'une région, que les sociétés obéissent strictement à une doctrine préalable, constituée en dehors d'eux, en suivent les préceptes, s'imprègnent de son esprit sans transformation essentielle, sans qu'ils l'adaptent à leurs conditions de vie et à leurs modes de pensée implicitement suggérés par celles-ci.[149]

But Rodinson's book is rather a programme of research than itself a work of original scholarship. It is in the work of another French scholar, Claude Cahen, that we can find perhaps the most systematic attempt to apply mature sociological concepts to the realities of Islamic society. The guiding principles are explained in an essay in *Studia Islamica*. In the last resort human history is a single process, and the rise of Islam did not by itself create a new world.

We cannot in fact understand Islam and its development unless we realise that it took place in 'une société matérielle' which already existed. The adoption of a new religion did not by itself change economic conditions or social structure. In course of time indeed the governments, laws and practices of Islam *tended* to change society, but only up to a point, and the basic problem for the economic or social historian is this: beginning with the ancient societies incorporated in the Muslim political structure, to see what became of them, as compared with those of western Europe and Byzantium.[150] This problem has been explored in a number of detailed studies which have had much influence on the way in which scholars of the present generation look at Islam.[151]

[1] L. Massignon, 'Situation de l'Islam' in *Opera Minora* (Beirut, 1963), Vol. I, p. 12.
[2] R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[7] N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image.*
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 272.
[11] Malvezzi, *L'Islamismo e la cultura europea*, p. 235.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 261-2.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[15] W. Rainolds, *Calvino-Turcismus* (Antwerp, 1597), preface: quoted in Malvezzi, p. 247.
[16] B. Pascal, *Œuvres*, ed. L. Brunschvicg, Vol. XIV (Paris, 1921), pp. 37-8.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 34, 36.
[19] London, 1697; cf. P. M. Holt, 'the treatment of Arab history by Prideaux, Ockley and Sale' in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (ed.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 290 f.
[20] Holt, p. 292.
[21] Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, Ch. VII, quoted in Malvezzi, p. 299.
[22] In J. M. A. Voltaire, *Œuvres Complètes*, Vol. IV (Paris, 1877), p. 115.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[24] [D. Diderot and J. le R. d'Alembert], *Encyclopédie*, Vol. IX (Neufchatel, 1765), p. 864.
[25] Leibnitz, *Essai de Théodicée*, in *Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt, Vol. VI (Berlin, 1885), p. 27; Eng. tr. by E. M. Huggerd (London, 1952), p. 51.
[26] J. J. Rousseau, 'Du Contrat Social' in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris, 1964), Book IV, Chap. VIII, pp. 462-3.
[27] Condorcet, 'Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain'

in *Œuvres*, ed. by A. Condorcet O'Connor and M. F. Arago, Vol. VI (Paris, 1847), p. 1202; Eng. tr. by J. Barraclough (London, 1953), pp. 86-7.

[28] Comte de Boulainvilliers, *La Vie de Mahomed* (London, 1730), p. 247.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[30] Cf. R. Simon, *Henry de Boullainvilliers* (Paris, n.d. [1941]).

[31] Comte de la Casas, *Le Memorial de Sainte-Hélène*, ed. M. Dunan (Paris, 1951), Vol. I, p. 528-9; cf. C. Cherfils, *Bonaparte et l'Islam* (Paris, 1914).

[32] E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, Vol. V (London, 1911), p. 361.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 400-1.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 419-21.

[35] F. von Schlegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, Vol. II (Vienna, 1829), pp. 70-107; Eng. tr. by J. B. Robertson (London, 1846), pp. 317-42.

[36] [J. H. Newman]. *Lectures on the History of the Turks: its Relation to Christianity* (Dublin, 1854), p. 105.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[41] Sir W. Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall* (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 601.

[42] Sir W. Muir, *The Life of Mohammed* (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 522.

[43] H. Lammens, 'Mohamet fut-il sincère?' in *Recherches de Sciences Réligieuses*, 2nd year (1911), No. 1, p. 48.

[44] Cf K. S. Salibi, 'Islam and Syria in the writings of Henri Lammens' in Lewis and Holt, pp. 330-42.

[45] C. Forster, *Mohametanism Unveiled*, 2 vols. (London, 1829), Vol. I, p. 62.

[46] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 68-9.

[47] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 107.

[48] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 378.

[49] Cf. J. Daniélou, *Le mystère du salut des nations* (Paris, 1951).

[50] Cf. Waardenburg, p. 136 f., 257 f., 283 f.

[51] L. Massignon, 'La Palestine et la paix dans la justice' in *Opera Minora*, Vol. III (Beirut, 1963), p. 461.

[52] Massignon, 'Les trois prières d'Abraham' in *Opera Minora*, Vol. III, pp. 811-2.

[53] Massignon, 'Situation de l'Islam' in *Opera Minora*, Vol. I, p. 14.

[54] Massignon, *La Passion d'Al-Hallaj* (Paris, 1922), Vol. II, p. 463.

[55] Massignon, 'L'homme parfait en Islam et son originalité eschatologique' in *Opera Minora*, Vol. I, p. 107 f.

[56] N. Daniel, 'Some recent developments in the attitude of Christians towards Islam' in A. H. Armstrong and E. J. B. Fry (Ed.), *Discovering Eastern Christendom* (London, 1963), p. 165.

[57] Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran* (Paris, 1958), p. 100, 107, 143.

[58] M. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam* (Paris, 1959), pp. 10-16.

[59] J. M. Abdel-Jalil, *Marie et l'Islam* (Paris, 1950).

[60] Cf. D. Masson, *Le Coran et la révélation judeo-chrétienne*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1959). For a careful and responsible criticism by a Christian theologian, cf. G. C. Anawati, 'Vers un dialogue islamo-chrétien' in *Revue Thomiste*, 1964, 2 and 4.

[61] L. Gardet, *La Cité musulmane* (Paris, 1954); *Connaître l'Islam* (Paris, 1958); 'Recherches de l'Absolu' in *Les Mardis de Dar el-Salam 1951* (Cairo n.d.); Gardet and M. M. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris, 1948); Anawati and Gardet, *La Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1961).

[62] J. Jomier, *Bible et Coran* (Paris, 1959), pp. 117-8.

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